

Dr. B. C. ROY  
1st July, 1954

**DR. B. C. ROY**

**K. P. THOMAS**

**WEST BENGAL  
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## CONTENTS

<i>Chaptc</i>			<i>Page</i>
	Foreword ...	...	7
	Introduction ...	...	9
✓ I.	Battle for Bengal ...	...	17
II.	Ancestry ...	...	21
III.	The Prophecy ...	...	33
J.V.	Childhood ...	...	38
V.	Boyhood ...	...	42
VI.	Student Life in Calcutta ...	...	46
VII.	In England ...	...	58
VIII.	The Struggle ...	...	65
IX.	Early Practice ...	...	71
X.	From Campbell to Carmichael ...	...	78
XI.	In the University ...	...	86
✓ II.	On the Political Stage ...	...	90
XIII.	Mayor ...	...	109
XIV.	With Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das ...	...	120
XV.	Association with Sir Nilratan Sarkar and Dr. Suresh Sarbadhikari ...	...	126
XVI.	Industrialist ...	...	135
XVII.	As a Congress Leader ...	...	140
XVIII.	Arrest and Jail Life ...	...	153
XIX.	With Gandhiji ...	...	162
XX.	Journalist ...	...	175
XXI.	Revival of the Swarajya Party ...	...	180
XXII.	Bengal Congress ...	...	186
XXIII.	Vice-Chancellor ...	...	195
XXIV.	Aga Khan's Palace ...	...	199
XXV.	Gandhian Influence ...	...	204
XXVI.	Calcutta Riots ...	...	213
XXVII.	Chief Minister ...	...	221
XXVIII.	The Man at the Steering Wheel ...	...	226
XXIX.	The Chief Minister and His State ...	...	236
XXX.	Home Life ...	...	249
XXXI.	Institutions ...	...	258

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		<i>Facing Page</i>
1.	Dr. B. C. Roy (1st July, 1954) ...	... Frontispiece
2.	Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in Dr. Roy's House	... 7
3.	Dr. B. C. Roy while in the United States (1953) ...	... 9
4.	Dr. Roy with Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Governor Dr. H. C. Mookerjee ...	... 17
5.	Poet Rabindranath with Prakash Chandra Roy	... 25
6.	Prakash Chandra Roy and Aghore Kamini Debi	... 32
7.	Dr. Roy sitting beside his father's dead body	... 40
8.	Dr. Roy sitting beside the dead body of his mother	... 40
9.	Col. Lukis	... 48
10.	Family Group	... 56
11.	Dr. B. C. Roy (1911)	... 65
12.	Dr. B. C. Roy (1937)	... 71
13.	Dr. B. C. Roy (1938)	... 81
14.	Bengal Legislative Council, 1929	... 89
15.	Dr. Roy, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad	... 96
16.	Dr. Roy with Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee	... 100
17.	Rajaji, Dr. K. N. Katju and Dr. B. C. Roy	... 113
18.	Dr. Roy with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. S. N. Ray on the top of the New Secretariat	... 113
19.	Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das	... 120
20.	Dr. Roy with Gandhiji	... 168
21.	Dr. Roy with the President of the Phillipines	... 176
22.	Dr. Roy, Marshal Tito and Pandit Nehru at Calcutta	... 180
23.	Gandhiji's note	... 184
24.	Dr. Roy broadcasting from the B.B.C.	... 188
25.	Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose	... 192
26.	Dr. Roy with Poet Rabindranath Tagore	... 200
27.	Dr. Roy with eminent medical men in Vienna, 1937	... 208
28.	Dr. Roy with world famous doctors	... 208
29.	Malaya Medical Mission	... 217
30.	The two great friends—Pandit Nehru and Dr. Roy	... 224
31.	Dr. Roy at work in his office	... 232
32.	Dr. Roy with Shri Atulya Ghosh and Shri Bijoy Singh Nahar	... 237
33.	At Gangtok—Dr. Roy, Maharaja of Sikkim, Pandit Nehru and Mrs. Indira Gandhi	... 240
34.	Dr. Roy with Pandit Nehru at Gangtok	... 243
35.	Dr. B. C. Roy with Sri Prafulla Chandra Sen	... 245
36.	Dr. B. C. Roy with his grand nephew on his 74th birthday	... 248
37.	Dr. Roy on his 74th birthday in his library	... 252
38.	Dr. Roy with the author and his two nephews	... 257
39.	Dr. Roy with Sri Sures Majumdar at the author's residence	... 257
40.	Dr. B. C. Roy with Lady Mountbatten and Dr. Subodh Mitra at the Chittaranjan Cancer Hospital	... 263
41.	Dr. B. C. Roy with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Subodh Mitra at the Chittaranjan Cancer Hospital	... 264





PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU IN DR ROY'S HOUSE



New Delhi,  
July 19, 1955.

### FOREWORD

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy has had a varied career and he has participated in a multitude of activities. In each of them, he has distinguished himself. But he is something more than a person of distinction in these various activities. He has grown into an institution not only in Calcutta and Bengal but in India.

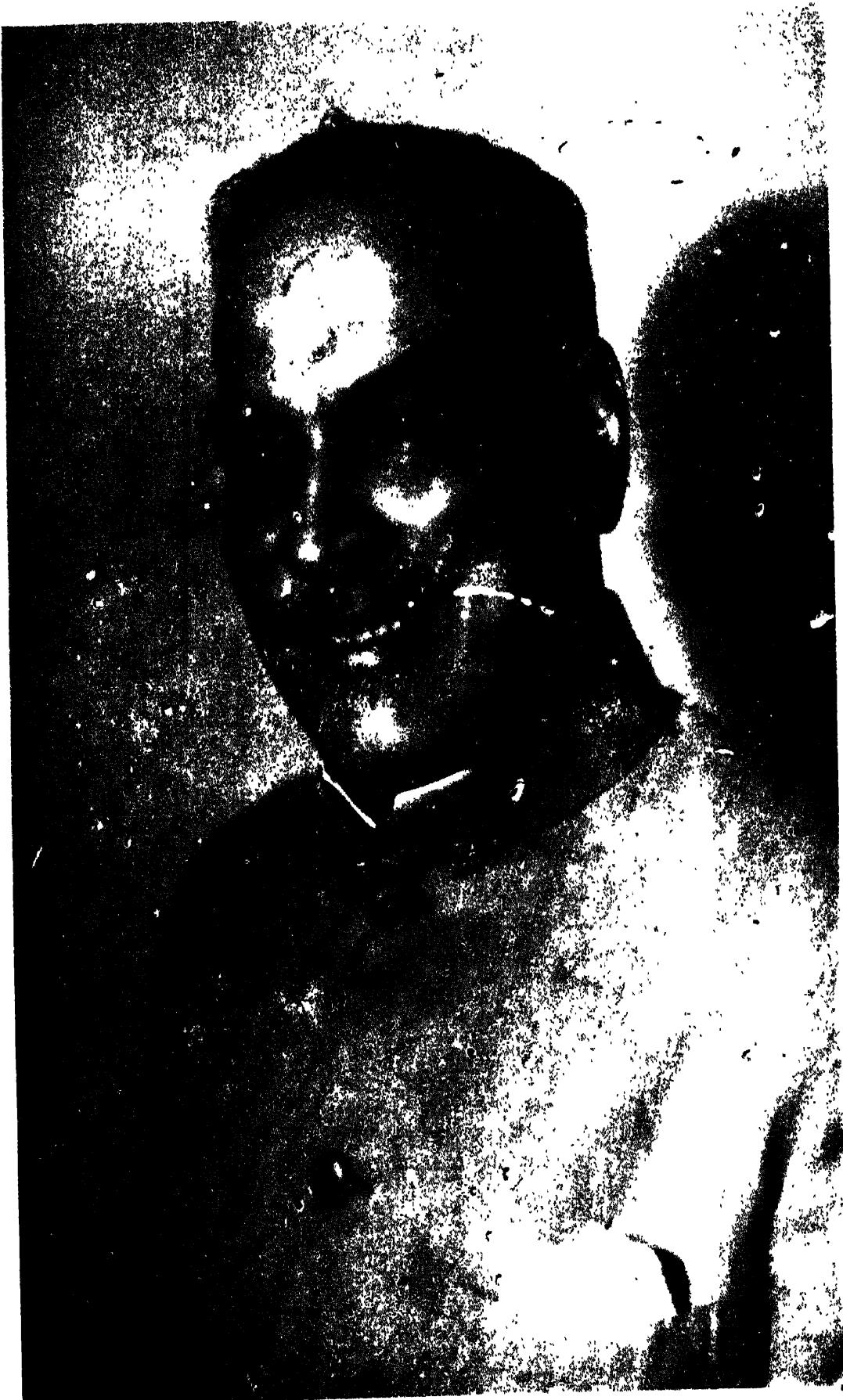
Some of us have had the additional privilege of personal friendship with him and have often sought his sage counsel in private and public matters. It is a little difficult, therefore, to write about one with whom one has such a close association. But everyone knows his high ability, his dynamic personality, his tremendous urge to further the public good and the dominant position that he occupies in our public life.

I am glad that Shri K.P.Thomas has written a biography of Dr. B.C.Roy, and I hope that many will profit by it.

Jawaharlal Nehru







DR. B. C. ROY WHILE IN THE UNITED STATES (1953)

## INTRODUCTION

I would not call this a biography of Dr. B. C. Roy, but rather a groundwork for his biography. I must confess at the very outset that it was a rash enterprise on my part to have accepted the responsibility of writing the life-story of so great a man, who has distinguished himself in ever so many spheres of life. I must admit that it was at a very weak moment that I accepted the request of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee to undertake the work.

I would explain here how it all happened, more as an apologia than as a compliment. During my stay in Calcutta for the last two decades, I had the unique privilege and opportunities to come into intimate contact with many of the outstanding personalities, and particularly the "Big Five" of Bengal. I knew Netaji Subhas Bose personally, but I became more intimate with his brother, Shri Sarat Chandra Bose. And thereafter, I came into contact with Tulsi Charan Goswami, Nirmal Chandra Chunder, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. Somehow, all these leaders had a kind heart for me, and I became intimate with them. As a journalist I came to study the political trends of the Province and the personal traits of these men as also of others in the field. I nourished the ambition to write a book on my reminiscences which necessarily would also include my contacts with these outstanding personalities. With that ambition I came in touch with Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, and instinctively I developed within myself an admiration for him and wanted to know him more intimately. Somehow, Dr. Roy gave me the pleasure of his company whenever he was free and often I went to his house or accompanied him when he went out. I used to ask him questions about his past life, how he grew up and all that sort of thing and in a reminiscent mood he would answer me. Returning home, I used to make notes of the conversation. As I got to know

him more and more, I became fascinated with his life-story. He had always appeared to me as one who has no special political or other ambitions, but one capable of shouldering any responsibility in any sphere of activity. I believe my frequent visits to, and association with, him left in him an impression that I was sincerely devoted to him without aspiring for any particular favour. As such, he became more and more free with me. I took advantage of that freedom in gathering the less known aspects of his life. The only explanation that I could give him at that time for my enquiries and questions was of my intention to write my reminiscences of Bengal. Dr. Roy knew that I was very friendly with Sarat Babu and his other compatriots as also with many of the leading personalities of this State.

This is the genesis of my adventure—and I call it an adventure because it was a Herculean task to acquaint myself with the life-story of a man, who had played different roles in numerous fields of activity,—political, educational, civic and medical.

I realised my incompetence to do full justice only when I sat to work. The story of his parents appealed to me very much, and probably I have given a summary of it in this book. I must confess I could have devoted more pages to the lives of Bidhan's father Prakash Chandra Roy and his mother Aghor Kamini Devi whose character is imprinted on Dr. Roy. I would agree with Dr. Roy that it was the spiritual legacy that he inherited from his parents which guided him to success in his life, and goaded him on to the service of the people. Parents Prakash Chandra and Aghor Kamini had implanted in Bidhan the spirit of service. At 74 Dr. Roy could say truthfully that he has lived up to the expectation of his father who expressed it in his prayer both on the occasion of Bidhan's first birth anniversary and 20 years later. I would not say here more of the spiritual inheritance he had from his parents as I have given a full chapter on it.

With Bidhan's life should be associated the name of a great Englishman, Col. Lukis, who had been more than a

## INTRODUCTION

friend, philosopher and guide to him. It was this gentleman who inspired and helped him not merely to achieve success in his profession but also to serve the nation.

As I have said earlier, this is only a groundwork for his biography because I have not been able to provide the readers with a continuous narration of the life-story of this great man. "Dr. Roy", as Shri Jawaharlal Nehru in his 'Foreword' has said, "is an institution by himself". An institution, I should add, that has many branches every one of which is bearing fruits. It is not an easy task for a layman like me to write in detail about the numerous thrilling achievements of so outstanding a physician. His eminence in the medical world is recognised in India and outside, and one could write a book on that aspect alone of his life. But I had to content myself with making only a passing reference to his professional life in order to make room for dealing with his other activities as Vice-Chancellor, Mayor, Politician and Administrator. Bidhan played a vital role in all these and it is impossible for any man to give a detailed account of his activities in the numerous fields. My attempt has been to consolidate them and bring them all together into one book.

That apart, Bidhan was not a politician in the conventional sense of the expression nor a professional one. He took to politics as and when the urge came to him or he was called to shoulder responsibility. In early life one could see that he had never aspired for any position nor ever worked for it. After having been blessed by Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge), Luxmi (Goddess of Wealth) favoured him. Then Vishnu (The God of Power) patronised him. Bidhan's life is the story of a man to whom honours came of their own accord. I have done my best to present the life-story of this man who to me is a genius of an extra-ordinary type.

Mahatma Gandhi who understood human nature so well and who could value the worth of a man had selected Bidhan for his personal friendship just as he had chosen some of the most outstanding leaders of the country like Pandit Motilal

DR. B. C. ROY

Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others. Gandhiji's instinctive appreciation of Bidhan as of others was perfectly justified. Dr. Roy has not only fulfilled the hopes of the Mahatma but he has also proved himself one of the ablest administrators of India.

I must confess as I have already stated that I could not do full justice to this work which I had undertaken. Bidhan's life has been a life full of activities in different spheres, in each and every one of which he played a vital role. My original idea was only to know this outstanding personality and get such facts about his life as are necessary for my 'reminiscences' of Bengal, which I had planned to write. Later, I felt within myself that a fuller and detailed account of Bidhan's life-story would serve a great purpose in inspiring the younger generation of this country and to instil into them the hope that anybody who struggled hard and devoted himself to his work could achieve success. Bidhan braved poverty, but he did not succumb to the vicissitudes of fortune. He fought valiantly against adversity and worked hard to achieve success whether in his profession or in any other field. As his great leader Deshbandhu advised him, he neither wooed power or position, but kicked at them, and they came to him. There is enough in his life for others to emulate, and I thought it would be a service to the nation to give an account of the struggles and successes of Dr. B. C. Roy.

My great difficulty, particularly because of my being a non-Bengalee, was to understand in the true perspective the courses of Bengal's political history and its past events. At the same time it gave me an advantage over many others in that I could stand aloof and look at the political scene from a disinterested and impartial angle.

I was fully conscious of the handicaps and limitations of writing the biography of a living man, who occupies the position of the Chief Minister of a major State like West Bengal. Therefore, I have avoided as far as possible the flux and reflux of party politics in Bengal. I have restricted

## INTRODUCTION

myself only to the part that Bidhan played. That may be an explanation if one misses a fuller account of Bengal politics before and after Partition.

Having decided to write the book my problem was to get all the materials needed for it. What Dr. Roy told me about himself in answer to my queries off and on was not sufficient for a life-story. I was fortunate in having been entrusted by his brother, Subodh Roy, with the task of revising the English translation of his father Prakash Chandra Roy's autobiography under the title "Aghor-Prakash". That gave me the materials to construct the ancestry, parentage and early life of Bidhan.

As for his later life it was indeed a difficult job for me to get a detailed and continuous account. Many of the people with whom he worked in the various spheres of his activities are not there to tell the story, and those that could recall would perhaps give only one version, and on many occasions I have had conflicting stories. Therefore, I had felt that the best man from whom I could get an authentic version was Dr. Roy himself and on several occasions I had to trouble him for this. And if one knows how busy Dr. Roy has been all these years, probably he could realise the difficulties. And even if obligingly he would reply to a query, he goes so fast—speed is in everything that Dr. Roy does, he thinks quickly, decides at once, walks briskly and drives fast—that it was difficult for me to take notes of what he said. In that I must reveal that I got the help of his three Personal Assistants to whom I had suggested that they should take a speedy note of what he says, so as to enable me to be factually correct. I must admit that these three, Saroj Chakraverty, Jatin Bose and Dhruva Sen, have been of invaluable help to me in so far as they have recorded much of what Dr. Roy disclosed in conversation. That has enabled me to reproduce in this book Dr. Roy's own reactions on several matters.

Though I had decided to write the life-story of Bidhan I never thought I would have to do it in a great hurry.

It happened like this. On several occasions while Dr. Roy in a reminiscent mood spoke of his past life, Shri Atulya Ghosh, President of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, used to come in to discuss something or other with the Chief Minister. And jokingly one day Atulya Babu asked me: "What are you trying to get from Dr. Roy? As a journalist, I thought, you would be asking of the present and not of the past." I had to tell him that I was trying to get the life-story of this famous man so as to write a book on him and the other leaders of Bengal probably after I retired from my profession and went back to my home in Travancore.

In May last when the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee was planning the celebration of Dr. Roy's 74th birthday, Shri Atulya Ghosh sent for me and suggested that I should write the biography of Dr. Roy to be presented on the occasion. I hesitated, knowing full well that there was neither the time nor enough material gathered to produce it by the 1st of July this year. But he was anxious that I should undertake the work as he felt that I had had the opportunities and privilege to learn from Bidhan himself about his past life. Without much thought I agreed as I had already collected some materials for it. Though the time was too short I began the work immediately. But as ill-luck would have it, I could not keep up to the time first settled. I had pressing calls from my home to go there and see my ailing parents and, therefore, I suggested the postponement of the publication to a later date. Shri Atulya Ghosh agreed, convinced of my difficulties, and he fixed the date of the official presentation of the biography on the Independence Day, the 15th August, 1955. I lost about 15 valuable working days by leaving Calcutta. In spite of it I felt confident that we could bring out the book according to the time scheduled.

Here I must reveal an earlier mishap which had completely upset me. One night two monkeys got into my study room and played havoc with my table. They took

## INTRODUCTION

off quite a number of papers, tore them and threw them away and on the rest spilled the inkpot, all as a revenge against me for driving them away the previous day. They continued their attack to cause further destruction and eventually I had to get Police help to get them out of the premises. They had destroyed many other papers, including some of the interesting notes I had kept of Bidhan's life and activities.

Nevertheless, the work progressed, but the common flu also came in to add to my anxiety.

Despite all these difficulties I have somehow been able to finish the work though not to my satisfaction. In that I should make mention of my indebtedness to my colleague and friend Mr. Manindra Narayan Roy, President of the Indian Journalist Association, for collaborating with me in this work especially in getting the necessary facts regarding the early political career of Dr. Roy as also of his achievements as the Chief Minister. In all my difficulties to bring this out on the scheduled date I have been helped considerably by Shri Krabhat Chandra Ray, the veteran Manager of Sri Gouranga Press Ltd., and his experienced Head-reader Shri Bidhu Ranjan Das. Before I conclude I must express my gratitude to Shri Atulya Ghosh for his co-operation and to that young promising Congress worker, Shri Nirmalendu Dey, who helped us much in this production. Last, but not the least, is my indebtedness to the various persons, who have helped me with the photographs. I am particularly indebted to Shri Subodh Roy for allowing me the use of some rare photographs of the family.

I have attempted at a factual presentation of the life-story of Dr. Roy and as I said at the opening of this introduction, it is only a groundwork for the fuller biography that may be written later unless of course Dr. Roy finds the time to give the public an autobiography.

Above all, I must express my gratitude to our beloved Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, in giving me the Foreword to this book immediately after his return from

**DR. B. C. ROY**

his tour of Russia and the other countries. Words are inadequate to express my feelings for this ~~great~~ favour and honour done to me by Panditji.

**K. P. THOMAS**





Dr. Roy with President Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Governor Dr. H. C. Mookerjee.

## CHAPTER I

### BATTLE FOR BENGAL

"Freedom's battle once begun,  
Bequeath'd by bleeding sire to son,  
Though baffled oft, is ever won."

So sang Lord Byron. And it has almost come true in the history of Bengal, from Maharaj Pratapaditya to Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy—from the crowned king of South Bengal to the “uncrowned king” of West Bengal. Bengal had long been under alien rule, first of the Pathans, then of the Moghuls and lastly of the British. Probably that may explain why Bengal took the lead in all liberation movements.

The Battle for Bengal had always been the battle for India's liberation. In the line of eminent Bengalees who resisted domination from early days, the name of Maharaj Pratapaditya stands out gloriously prominent. Pratapaditya raised the banner of liberty against the might and power of the Moghul Emperors, and declared Bengal independent about four centuries ago. Many of this generation in Bengal and elsewhere may not know that Dr. B. C. Roy, the Chief Minister, is a descendant of the family of Maharaj Pratapaditya. Indeed, it has been a long march from Pratapaditya to Bidhan Chandra Roy who stands eighth in the line of that illustrious family. Since then, much water has flown in the river Hugli which itself has changed its course many a time, though keeping the essential unity and sanctity of the Ganges. History, like all living processes, goes on with complete disregard of our arbitrary measures of feet and miles, or days and years. It merely develops and unrolls. The event of Maharaj Pratapaditya's revolt against Moghul domination is not an isolated one in history, as it is the beginning of the struggle for India's national independence,

later waged against British overlordship. The past three or four centuries of our history are like the vertebrae of a spine, each, though a unit in itself, is inter-related with the other and articulated into a given series of joints.

In the life-story of nations, sometimes successive generations of particular families play a vital role. For three generations Mahatma Gandhi's ancestors were the Prime Ministers in several Kathiawad States and the interesting episode of his grandfather, Ota Gandhi, who saluted the Nawab of Junagadh with the left hand, explaining the courtesy with the remark that "the right hand is already pledged to Porbander" which he had left owing to State intrigues, is still fresh in memory. Nearer our times, the mantle of Pandit Motilal Nehru has gloriously adorned his son, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

In the battle for Britain, it was left to Sir Winston Churchill, the grand-descendant of the Victor of Blenheim, the first Duke of Marlborough, to lead his country to success in World War II. Likewise, in the battle for Bengal, started by Maharaj Pratapaditya, it was left to a descendant of his family, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, to head the administration of liberated West Bengal.

Maharaj Pratapaditya is not a legendary figure but a real hero whose name even to this day thrills every Bengali heart. Pratapaditya was one of the most powerful Ruling Princes of Bengal who grew up with the unquenchable thirst to liberate his country from the domination of the Delhi Emperors. His father, Shrihari, or Shridhar, better known to history as Maharaj Bikramaditya, and his cousin Raja Basanta Roy were outstanding personalities of Eastern India. Maharaj Bikramaditya, apprehensive of the consequences of his son's lurking ambition to declare Bengal independent, sent him to the Moghul Court so that he might develop friendly relations with the Emperor there. It produced just the contrary effect on young Pratap who utilised his time at the Court more to learn of the military organisation of the Moghuls than to cultivate friendship with them. On his return to

## BATTLE FOR BENGAL

Bengal, Pratapaditya raised a huge army and a cavalry and modelled his military organisation on that of the Delhi Emperors. He captured and took possession of Jessore and subjugated Orissa. Then he was crowned King of South Bengal with his capital in the Sunderbans, on the Full Moon day of Baisakh (Bengali New Year), 989 corresponding to 1582 A.D.—a day still commemorated in his honour by his countrymen. He brought under him many of the other Princes and Zamindars of Bengal.

Furious at his declaration of independence, Emperor Akbar deputed Isha Khan to fight him. The Moghul lost the battle and Pratap annexed Hijli. Thereafter, successive campaigns were started against him by the Delhi Emperor. Pratap defeated the armies of Sher Khan, Ibrahim Khan and Azam Khan in battles and then captured Saptagram, Rajmahal and Patna Fort. Maharaj Pratapaditya's name and fame went far and wide. His army was entirely composed of Bengalees and was commanded by the middle classes. Fearing the growing power and prestige of Pratapaditya, Akbar's son, Jchangir, sent a mighty army under his Military General, Man Singh. That was no match for Pratapaditya's forces, but he was treacherously betrayed by some of his own men and was defeated and taken a captive. It was the ambition of Man Singh to produce Pratap in chains before the Delhi Emperor, but Maharaj Pratapaditya died on the way at holy Benares. The story goes that Pratapaditya to escape the dishonour and humiliation of standing before the Emperor of Delhi as a captive, took some deadly poison and ended his life.

There is an equally thrilling story about Maharaj Pratapaditya's wife, Padmini, who, on hearing that the battle was lost with her son Udayaditya killed and her husband taken captive, ordered all the other members of the family to board a ship which was kept ready for their escape. As the vessel moved into the deep waters, it was scuttled and all those in it perished—perished without falling into the hands of their enemies. Thus, the 'Padmini of Bengal' ended her life like 'Padmavati of Chitor'.

So loved was Pratapaditya in Bengal, that even in his life-time poems were sung in his praise. One such was composed by the famous Bharat Chandra, a translation of which reads:—

“His palace is in the City of Jessore,  
    His name is Pratap Aditya,  
He is the Maharaja of Bengal,  
    Of caste, Kayastha.  
He cares not even for the Emperor,  
    Nobody dares stand up to him,  
In fear all smaller kings,  
    Wait at his door.  
Favourite son of Bhawani,  
    • Most loved on earth,  
Who has fifty-five thousand infantry,  
    Hundreds of elephants, thousands of cavalry,  
Whose Commander-in-Chief in times  
    Of war is Kali herself.” •

Maharaj Pratapaditya fought the battle for Bengal and to Bidhan Chandra Roy, the scion of his family, has fallen the great responsibility of consolidating the freedom of West Bengal that has been achieved with the liberation of India.

## CHAPTER II

### ANCESTRY

Bidhan Chandra Roy was born on the 1st July 1882 at Bankipore, Patna, where his father Prakash Chandra Roy was then an Abkari (Excise) Inspector. At that time the present State of Bihar, of which Patna is the capital city, was in the province of Bengal. Prakash Chandra Roy was born in the year 1847, also in the month of July, at Berhampore where his father Prankali Roy was employed in the Collectorate. It may be said here that though they were descendants of Raja Basanta Roy, they did not inherit all the wealth of their princely ancestor. Much of it was confiscated after the death of Pratapaditya and the remaining portion had to be divided among the different members of the family. Nevertheless, they had considerable landed properties but as the family expanded, many of the members had to take to some employment under the Government. Prankali Roy, grandfather of Bidhan, was famous for his purity of life and philanthropic activities. Prakash Chandra was his eighth child and when only sixteen, he lost his father. Thereafter, he had to depend on his brothers for his maintenance and education. In the circumstances which then existed, no suitable arrangement could be made for his studies.

Bereft of his father, there was no one to guide and control Prakash Chandra, his elder brothers having been busy with their own jobs. Naturally, young Prakash drifted into the company of undesirable people and sauntered about in the streets without any definite ambition or aim in life. Religion was not a strong point with him at that age, though his father was a pious person. A little incident shattered his faith in idol worship, about which he records an anecdote in his book "Aghore-Prakash" (a testimony to his wife,

Aghore Kamini, of their united lives' activities). "There was an idol of the deity of Raghunath near about our residence at Berhampore", he writes. "I imbibed an abiding faith in this deity. On the occasion of the school examination, I sent up many a prayer to Raghunath so that I could stand first. I fell ill by chance immediately before the examination, preventing me from occupying the first place in it. This incident caused a diminution of my faith in Raghunath."

His early scepticism was further strengthened by reading Tom Payne's "Age of Reason" which created in him doubts about the existence of God.

After his father's death, Prakash Chandra stayed for some time with his third brother who also worked at Berhampore. On the transfer of his brother to Jessore, Prakash had to leave Berhampore and go to Calcutta to prosecute his studies. He appeared at the Entrance Examination from the Hare School in 1864, passed it and was placed in the second division. In the following year he returned to Berhampore to continue his studies for F.A.—F.A. was then equivalent to the present I.A.

Though still an agnostic, during his stay in Berhampore he came in contact with Christian missionaries and developed a particular friendship with Rev. J. S. Hill who was then the clergyman there. Prakash Chandra was a frequent visitor to the Hill family and both the Rev. gentleman and his wife treated him with parental affection and love. Under their guidance he read the Bible and was greatly influenced by the story of Jesus Christ, as also by the pious lives led by the Hills. "I was then able to understand the nature of a holy life", he reveals. "The clergyman realised Christ in his life. He loved the Indians very much and spoke the Bengali language like a born Bengalee." That was the turning point in the life of Prakash Chandra Roy. As if by an inspiration he began to believe in God and was attracted to a pious life. In that emotion he even desired to become a Christian. That, however, did not happen, as friends counselled him not to do any such thing like changing one's religion on the spur of the

## ANCESTRY

moment, without giving it due consideration for many hours. But the fervour to believe in God and worship Him still burnt in his heart. A little later, he came into intimate contact with some members of the Brahmo Samaj and was profoundly influenced by their lives, their form of worship and common prayer. Soon after, he joined the Brahmo Samaj and became one of its active members. No longer was he an atheist but an ardent believer in Almighty God and enjoyed the spiritual consolations in devotion, worship, community prayers and service to others.

Earlier, he had married Aghore Kamini, a daughter of Bepin Chandra Basu, who was a highly respected man of his own village Sripur and was well-known for his philanthropic and social activities. At the time of their marriage Prakash Chandra was eighteen and Aghore Kamini was only ten years of age.

Preceding the marriage an incident took place which undoubtedly influenced his mental outlook. He records in chilling clarity in "Aghore-Prakash" how he was insulted when invited to the house of his family preceptor to felicitate him on his marriage. There he was given sweets and other things to eat but almost as he finished eating, he was ordered to take away the leavings of his meal. His mind revolted at this humiliation of a prospective bridegroom who received nothing but honour and respect from all. Moreover, there were servants in the house and he himself had one with him. But it was the prevailing custom then and Prakash Chandra had to take away the leavings of the meal with fear and reluctance. Then and there he cursed the tribe preceptors and vowed to himself not to countenance such insults in his life again.

His marriage took place with a lot of pomp in March 1866. Soon after he brought his wife to his own house. Aghore Kamini was young and illiterate at that time and as was the custom in the Hindu society of those days, the daughter-in-law had to work hard in the house almost like a galley-slave. That apart, she had the disadvantage of being the wife of a

non-earning member of the family, which inevitably produced superiority of airs in the elder sisters-in-law.

To all accounts, Aghore Kamini was an extremely beautiful girl, highly intelligent and quick-witted. Prakash Chandra loved his young wife passionately and had decided to make her literate so that she could be a worthy companion and share fully his spiritual and material life. When work in the house was over late at night, Aghore Kamini became the pupil of her husband who taught her to read and write Bengali. Within a short time, she not only mastered the language but her mind expanded and she was even able to understand, appreciate and accept the religious beliefs of her husband. In due course, she became a staunch Brahmo Samajist and, as a matter of fact, in later life she was even the inspirer of many leading members of the Samaj of her time. Her devotion, piety, self-sacrifice and service to others have been appreciated by a large section of the people, including the great Keshab Chandra Sen.

Most people to-day may not know how hard life was for Bidhan's parents in their early days. Though, no doubt, the Roy family (and they were Roy Chaudhuris) had considerable landed properties, most of them were lost during Prakash Chandra's early days for one reason or other, not excluding disputes and litigation among the members of the family. As such, Prakash Chandra and his brothers had to live on their individual earnings. There was not money enough even to meet his school fees and he used to teach children in his leisure hours, thus earning Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 per month. He did not pass the B.A. examination. For a while he thought he would study law, hoping to practise as a lawyer and had the ambition of one day becoming a judge. But he had his misgivings about law, as a friend in the profession had warned him that it would be difficult to preserve conscience in it. Then he decided to learn work in the Post Office and after two years of study, passed the examination in 1871. He had his first appointment as a temporary Post Master at Burdwan on a monthly salary of Rs. 37/8/- . There Prakash





POET RABINDRANATH WITH PRAKASH CHANDRA K  
(Father of Dr. Roy)

Chandra and his wife had to practise the strictest economy to live on this meagre amount. By extreme frugality they were able to save Rs. 50/- in the course of three months. Soon the temporary job came to an end and they had to leave Burdwan with their little savings. Aghore Kamini was sent to her father's house and Prakash Chandra stayed in Calcutta where he joined his friend Kedar as a partner in his printing press, called the Rai Press. Here Prakash Chandra stayed with his friend and practically got no remuneration for his work. There was not much profit either and he had contributed nothing towards the capital. After working several months, his friend gave him Rs. 40/- out of the profits of the concern. With that amount he left Calcutta and for a time wandered aimlessly in search of a job.

The next appointment he secured was that of a Post Master at Baguria, which he soon gave up as not being suitable. Afterwards, he got a job as a second Schoolmaster at Harinbari and served there until December 1873. He left that when he was appointed Superintendent of Famine Relief at Motihari in Bihar. This was a more attractive post, for besides being a Government job, it carried a salary of Rs. 80/- per month as well. But even at Motihari they had to live very frugally as Prakash Chandra had to send Rs. 30/- every month to his mother. Despite all their hardships, they lived a happy life contented with what they had got and devoutly practising their religion.

An incident occurred at this time which is well worth recording. There was a great cyclone in South-East Bengal in which many people were killed and injured and a very large number rendered homeless. Appeals for relief and help were sent out from Calcutta by the Brahmo Samaj leader, Keshab Chandra Sen. The distress of the people caused great pain to Prakash Chandra and his wife Aghore Kamini, but they did not have the means to be of any help to the needy. Aghore Kamini decided to part with her ornaments given to her by her parents. These were sold and the money was sent to Calcutta for the relief of the dis-

tressed. Later, Prakash Chandra was appointed an Abkari Inspector at Patna. The higher authorities appreciating his hard work and sterling honesty, promoted him to the position of a Deputy Magistrate.

The parents of Bidhan Chandra Roy struggled hard not merely for their own existence but also in the service of others. They spared no pains and even endured physical and mental hardships to achieve what may be termed the 'spiritual union of their souls, free from all worldly attachments'.

From a Godless youth Prakash Chandra developed into a God-loving man and became one of the staunchest pillars of the Brahmo Samaj. He sacrificed much to give all around him happiness and consolation. His wife Aghore Kamini joined him in his efforts to sanctify and ennable the lives of all those within and without the family circle. It is indeed meritorious for an illiterate village girl, married at the age of 10, to be literate in Bengali and then accept of her own free will the new religion of her husband and later progress into one of the leading members of the Brahmo Society. Her life was pure and austere and she voluntarily accepted hardships to relieve the sorrows and sufferings of others. Even risking her own life she nursed and nourished people who suffered from highly contagious diseases. Her life was one of devotion, service and self-sacrifice.

Prakash Chandra and Aghore Kamini had five children. The eldest two were girls, Susharbashini and Sarojini. The latter is still alive. Their three sons were Subodh, Sadhan and Bidhan. Of these, Sadhan is no more.

It would surprise many people to learn that Aghore Kamini, after giving birth to five children, began her higher education along with her two eldest daughters. In fact, she stayed for a year with her daughters in Isabella Thoburn College at Lucknow and herself learnt not only the English language but also the art of running an educational institution for girls. During her stay at Lucknow she became one of the greatest friends of that famous Missionary lady, Miss

Isabella Thoburn, who had a high esteem and respect for her. Miss Thoburn did not treat her as a student but as a companion and even sought her advice on many problems. After this training, Aghore Kamini opened a small school at Bankipore, Patna, and devoted her time for the education of girls. She got no financial aid except from the little savings of her husband. It was a unique achievement. One might even call it a superhuman effort on the part of Aghore Kamini to start and maintain that institution, about which the "Indian Spectator" of April 2, 1893, paid a glowing editorial tribute. It wrote:—

"By far the most notable Institution, however, at Bankipore is an unpretentious Boarding House, managed by a Brahmo lady and her two daughters. Mrs. Prakash Chandra Roy is the wife of a gentleman who holds a respectable Government appointment and who is in well-to-do circumstances. At the age of thirty-five, she and her husband took the vow of Brahmacharya and both have religiously observed it up to date. With her husband's full consent, Mrs. Roy (perhaps I should spell 'Ray') went with her two daughters to Lucknow to study at Miss Thoburn's Institution there. One of the daughters is now twenty-four, the other is much younger. The elder is married, but continues to live with her parents and to help them in their beneficent works. The younger girl is a pearl. She is unmarried and looks after the children in the Boarding House with a little mother's care and sets there the example of true sisterly love and self-sacrifice. Mrs. Ray speaks English fluently and is well read.

"Early in the morning the children in her home offer their prayers in their own simple way, for no set prayers are used and no compulsion is put upon their tender conscience. Each of the elder boarders is in charge of one or two of the younger ones and each keeps a small diary in which she notes down every day her failings and backslidings, if any. The boarders attend the female school conducted under Mrs. Ray's supervision and are

DR. B. C. ROY

helped in their studies at home by her and her daughters. The whole cost of education and boarding amounts to Rs. 7 and odd per month. The children look blithe and lively and the lessons of purity, self-help and self-sacrifice taught to them by example and precept are likely to have an enduring influence on their after-life. The Boarding House is not kept for profit ; indeed, the amount charged to the boarders is much less than the actual cost. The deficit is made up by Mr. Ray who takes the deepest interest in the work of his wife and daughter's."

In March 1886 this School was visited by Mr. Bolton, the then Chief Secretary of the Government, and after seeing the Institution he observed :—

"I am very glad to have visited this School. It is unmarried ladies and widows who are doing all these things in India and in England. I have not seen a woman with her husband and children taking up such a work."

Aghore Kamini replied in her humble way :—

"We are gratified that you, as the representative of the Queen Empress, have given so much time to examine our petty School and have been fully satisfied."

From that small beginning the School has to-day grown into a gigantic institution. It is one of the biggest schools in India—the Bankipore Girls' High School, run by the Government of Bihar. There is also another School in Bankipore, named after Aghore Kamini.

The life-story of the progenitors of Bidhan would not be complete without mention being made of the tremendous sacrifices they made for the welfare of others, as also of their supreme efforts to achieve spiritual perfection.

After their fifth and last child, Bidhan, was born, the parents took the vow of celibacy. There is a story behind the choice of the name "Bidhan". As a matter of fact, it was Keshub Chandra Sen, the founder of Brahmo Samaj, who suggested it. At that time there was a controversy among the members of the Brahmo Samaj in relation to the marriage of Keshub Chandra Sen's daughter, Suniti Devi

## ANCESTRY

to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Keshub Chandra defended it on the argument that it was God's dispensation and from that time onwards he preached the philosophy of 'Nabar-Bidhan', or the New Dispensation.

On the occasion of the naming ceremony of Bidhan his parents took the vow of spiritual union in the presence of the Revered Trailokya Nath Sanyal of the Brahmo Samaj. Placing their hands on their new-born child, the parents declared that they would abstain from physical contact with each other—a vow they kept up religiously for the rest of their lives. It was after this great decision that Aghore Kamini went to Lucknow with her two daughters for studies in the Isabella Thoburn School, leaving her three sons in the care of their father. Both husband and wife used to write to each other, almost daily, of their individual activities. As their desire for complete detachment from worldly attachments grew in them with the progress of their spiritual experiments, they even decided not to communicate with one another through letters. Instead, each one kept a diary of daily activities, as also of their innermost thoughts and emotions. It is a strange coincidence that on many occasions they noted down the same thing in their respective diaries, though living at two different places. There was such a complete union of souls that if anything happened to the one, it was simultaneously felt by the other.

About three years after the birth of Bidhan, his father was promoted as Deputy Collector, with Motihari as his first jurisdiction. This new job gave him a higher status and also better remuneration. But these did not in any way detract them from their spiritual and social outlook, as they continued their austere life, devoting their time and money in the service of others. So strict, disciplined and religious were they in their daily lives that they would not do anything without first offering prayers to God and seeking His blessings. It was even the practice of the family to place the monthly salary of Prakash Chandra in the prayer

room and dedicate it to God, asking His blessings and guidance.

An interesting incident about it has been recorded by Prakash Chandra himself:—

"The 1st of September being a holiday, I could not get my salary on that date. We had to content ourselves with only one meal on the 2nd of September. At nightfall the money came but as it had not yet been dedicated to God, we could not utilise it. There were 4 children in the house (the eldest daughter, having been married, was away at that time) and we were two. For our food we had only a little milk, two *Bhuttas* and a few *Padam Chakas* (lotus pods). When our little baby Bidhan began to cry, you (the mother) served him with *Padam Chakas* and you yourself went away without meals. You gave half a *Bhutta* to your husband, the other children were served with a small quantity of milk and somehow the night passed off. I was speechless in seeing your patience and endurance. In the morning lotus flowers were arranged to your heart's content in the prayer room and the worship was conducted. It was only then that articles were purchased from the bazaar with the dedicated money."

Prakash Chandra and his wife lived a very highly disciplined life. While he would go out for his work, she would, besides looking after the household affairs, go to her school, visit the sick neighbours and attend to their needs. Prakash Chandra himself gives an account of her daily life in Aghore-Prakash:—

"Blessed Debi! Do you not remember how austere our daily life was at this period? Before leaving your bed in the morning you would recite the hymn to the Divine Mother with me. After that you would yourself make everything ready at the place of worship. You would not entrust this work to others. You would place the seats with devotion and wait for me. After the service, you would daily offer a short prayer. Then you would go to the kitchen, serve the children with food and arrange for

## ANCESTRY

their studies. You had to cook yourself. You could not always get the funds to keep a Brahmin cook. During the interval you would inquire about the welfare of two or three neighbouring households and try to supply their wants. In the evening you would read something and go out, if necessary. You yourself would look after the food and the clothing of your children. The night meals would be ready before nightfall to the youngsters and you would then arrange for their studies. Afterwards, both of us would sing the hymn. If there was any religious practice to be observed, we used to do it. After meals, we used to talk on religious matters."

- With such austerity and discipline they conquered all bodily attachments and completely immersed themselves in the service of God, which they translated in their actual lives by helping their neighbours in all their needs, difficulties and ailments. Prakash Chandra and Aghore Kamini visited various places in India from the Simla Hills to Darjeeling. Like all men and women in search of spiritual peace, they too had a fascination for hills and forests, which, incidentally, shows their great love of nature. It was while at Darjeeling that they became acquainted with Maharsi Debendra Nath Tagore, the father of Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. Not only did they become great friends of the Maharshi, but they also won the esteem and love of his son, Gurudev Rabindranath.

The most striking thing about the parents of Bidhan Chandra Roy was their absolute disregard for conventions and formalities. They were imbued with the desire to serve everyone, irrespective of caste, creed or community. Besides their Brahmo co-religionists, they had a large circle of friends among Hindus and Christians to whom they were deeply devoted. Aghore Kamini in her attempt to achieve complete detachment from physical attractions and worldly life, even cut off her own hair at an age when most women would be proud of their beauty and charm. She went a step further and attired herself in the dress of a widow.

The stories of her service to people in distress are many and varied. Not only did she nurse back to life many a sick and dying brother and sister of the neighbourhood, but she often undertook the work of consoling others in the wider field of her activities. Once a youth named Sanyasi Charan Roy who worked in one of the tea estates of Assam and who was arrested and sent to jail on a false charge of theft, was helped by her. Having heard his story which he confessed to her when she visited the jail, she was convinced of his innocence and tried her best to save him. She collected subscriptions for his defence so as to enable him to prove his innocence. Eventually he was acquitted. Similar instances are plenty in the life-story of Prakash Chandra and Aghore Kamini.

The strain of her work for others over and above her household duties literally shortened her life. Even when sick, she used to attend her school and struggled hard for its maintenance. On the 15th of June 1896 Aghore Kamini left this world, leaving besides her husband and five children, a very large circle of relations, friends and admirers in the deepest sorrow. It may be said that her own house was partly an orphanage, for she gave asylum to a number of children who had lost their parents.

After her death, her bereaved husband had to look after the children and the orphans in the house and to see to their education. Practising the highest frugality, he was able to give them all a good education. He first sent his eldest son, Subodh Chandra, to England. He returned qualified as a Barrister and started practice in Calcutta. His second son, Sadhan Chandra, was also sent to England and came back qualified as an Engineer. And of the third son, Bidhan Chandra, the story will be told in fuller detail in a later chapter.





PRAKASH CHANDRA ROY  
(Father of Dr. B. C. Roy)



AGHORE KAMINI DEBI  
(Mother of Dr. B. C. Roy)



## CHAPTER III

### THE PROPHECY

Bidhan was born a weakling and had long hair. His father used to say that he would be a Sanyasi. That prediction has come true in a different way, for though Bidhan Chandra Roy is not a religious ascetic, he has remained a bachelor throughout his life, devoting himself to the service of humanity with the enthusiasm of a Sanyasi.

On the birth anniversary of his youngest child, Bidhan, father Prakash Chandra made almost a prophetic prayer while dedicating him to God. Thanking 'Him for' His mercy, he even had the vision that this child would live to serve the larger humanity. The *Aradhana* (worship) of Prakash Chandra on that day has been recorded in the collection of his *Nibedan* (daily offering of prayers). He prayed,—

"You are a gem of the most precious value. Treasure of Truth, I find no pleasure by putting you in a damaged vessel. You are the Holy of Holies. You do not reside anywhere and everywhere. That is why, I desire to keep the temple of my heart unsullied. Your gift of this precious gem, this treasure of very great value is not to me alone. You have blessed the new-born also with that gift. He, in whom the divine wisdom has awakened, can well understand, O Truth, that You exist in the heart of all hearts. When I came to know You, my edifice, had already crumbled away. The structure of this child is not pulled down yet. But, as I know You in the mid'st of the shattered ruins of my abode, if he also is graced with the self-same knowledge about You, he will imbibe a redoubled gratitude. Indeed, gratitude will swell assuredly, if everybody of this family, everyone of this line, whoever he may be, and wherever he may reside, can find You in the innermost recess of his heart. Heart abounds with joy if care is

taken of Him, whom I consider to be the sublimest of the sublime. Who does not know that You are the Infinite? That fact You have revealed to me from the first. Oh Infinite, You have never deluded anyone. You will not delude this child also. He is saved,—one who has learnt to repose faith in You. He has no fear of death, neither has he any pitfall to slip into, nor has he any reason for repentance. So, I repent not. O Immeasurable One, You have ever accepted us. You are still continuing to accept. You accept all and sundry ; else, the quality of Your Mercy will be stained. If You had discriminated in the object of Your love, it would have been difficult then to rely upon such love. Your love descended unasked, even on him, whom You know to be a great sinner, whose life was full of blemishes. I never possessed any virtue, no, I possessed none at any time. I was picked up by Your Love and gathered up to You. Else, Your Love would not have been established. That is why, You selected the blemished one and delivered him from sin. You selected him, as the object of Your love ; him, who is a fool and devoid of all knowledge. You drew to your bosom, the lowliest and humblest of your children. How inexhaustible is the nectar of Your love. I look, O Lord, how this frail body and mind are being much strengthened by Your Love. I think, these others also will be similarly invigorated by the same love. They have indeed received Your love from the beginning ; specially this child has been the recipient of the highest bliss ; bliss heaped on bliss, love piled on love, the affection of parents, the fraternity of brothers and friends have followed him in his rearing and growth. Denial of this love saddens my heart. Oh God of Love, You descended on my soul, so also You appeared in all of them, and You have appeared to a great extent in that child also. How then would you depart again? The ocean never dries up. A little pond may do so. You, who are the All-pervasive Ocean of Love, tell me, how can You disappear? At last, I have come to You, to heaven and to

## THE PROPHECY

blissfulness. You asked me as soon as I arrived, how could I get away. Those that are sinful, those that are afflicted, can hardly wrench themselves away. But me, You have bound up with the indissoluble ties of Your mighty love ; You have placed a fetter on this child also, that is how he devotes himself to so much service. Lord of Service, if You do not enter the heart, who can find the strength to serve? With the strength of Your love, I have been able to draw near me what was distant. Everybody can accomplish this, can surely, surely accomplish this. Love has dawned, it has no decay, no destruction ; it will carry everybody to heaven. Oh Mother! we have reached this abode of love. In our few generations, we all have reached heaven. Mother, how can we deny the Bliss Divine which You have given. So we bow down to You, again and again, immersed in our meditation.

Twenty-three years after this dedication, when Bidhan had entered into the medical profession, his father made another invocation in which, too, he prophetically asserted that his youngest child was not only the greatest pillar of the united life of his parents, but that he would grow up as one of the pillars of Ashoka. In fact, it has come true, for Bidhan Chandra Roy is not only the living pillar of strength in West Bengal, but is also the guardian there of the Ashoka Chakra, the emblem of our National freedom. It is an invocation to Prakash's departed wife and a prayer to God,—

“Angel, ( of my life), rejoice. It is just twenty-four years, since this youngest and favourite child of yours, saw the light of this world at this hour. Before he attained half his present age, you left your mortal coils by the will of the Creator. Everybody then observed that they were left motherless children. I also grew anxious for this youngest child, lest he goes astray. Bereft of mother's affection, who knew what propensities he might develop? This gave me food for thought. That anxiety is no more to-day. He has vastly improved in knowledge, love and spirituality. If any evil now befalls him, its cause will no more be set down

to your glorious but untimely exit. Of that too, how can I say? You did not exist in the flesh, but you constantly looked after the welfare of all your children, specially so, of this, your youngest child. Man can never tread the evil path, if he receives heaven's blessings, if prayers are offered up for him in heaven. You have done well, you have acted beneficially by preserving him to the wholesome course of life ; else, my departure would have been bedewed with tears. He is particularly the pillar—emblem of a sacred fact. The pillars of Ashoka are strewn everywhere in India ; the relics of his pillars have not yet been destroyed. This child is that great pillar of our united life. I am still able to speak with uplifted head, because, he has remained unblemished. If children follow the path of evil, even if one single individual soul in the family goes astray, you know well, how very much mortified we feel. So you have preserved this child from evil ways. Now that he has become able to earn by his own effort, the risk of danger is far more than before. Guard him more carefully. Pour out to him the affections of your mother's heart unstintedly, so that, he may, in truth, become the shrine and abode of God. Bless all your children. Bless now these, your daughters, so that none may come by any ill. See to it that everyone may turn out a veritable pillar to God, a living temple to Him. This day, it is our only prayer to you.

"Lord, You have done so much, living in my dilapidated dwelling. This body, I injured long ago, through my own folly. Is it to show a greater manifestation of Your Mercy, that You descended on this damaged structure? For further aid, You sent us this tender child. The advent of the child was intended to remove all coarse tendencies. You reared the child up and kept him by our side aiding in our efforts these twenty-four years. We were blessed with great spiritual inspiration. I yearn now for more spiritual help. May we continue to be purified through contact with the goodness of this child. You imparted

## THE PROPHECY

much teaching on many occasions through the agency of the child, may this continue still. May he be a veritable temple to You. May his very sight, O Lord, arouse in my heart Your thought. This is my prayer at Your feet. And this more I pray, that these relatives, they too, may turn into God's houses. May no utterance come out from me, as to sever me from You ; nor may my conduct or countenance be such that I may drift away from You ; or turn away or be separated from You. Now, this is my concluding prayer that everybody may be a shrine dedicated to Your use, and that the sight of everyone may direct my thoughts on You. With this, I now bow down to Thee, again and again."

## CHAPTER IV

### CHILDHOOD

The youngest child in the family often receives greater affection and consideration from the parents than the others and Bidhan had an additional claim for them, having been born a weakling. He remained weak and also sensitive in childhood and even in boyhood. In the atmosphere and environment in which he was brought up, it was only natural that he should be profoundly influenced by the lives of his parents whose austerity, discipline and piety made a lasting impression on the child. There is no doubt that Bidhan's character was moulded by his parents. His God-loving and self-disciplined father used to tell his children that they should neither beg, nor borrow, nor refuse. Begging was denounced, because it created a feeling of helplessness in the individual and often led one to a life of degradation causing the loss of one's self-respect. Borrowing was condemned, as it led to restlessness and self-indulgence. In fact, father Prakash taught his children to be self-reliant and humble and if additional help was needed, to depend solely and entirely on God's will—as God helps those who help themselves. Man, according to his philosophy, had to work hard. He taught his children that honest and sincere efforts would not go unrewarded. At the same time, he asked them not to refuse anything that had been offered as a gift with selfless motive. Of course, his idea was that oftentimes God's gifts come through the instrumentality of others with no mean objective attached to them. But he warned them that gifts should not be accepted merely to satisfy one's inordinate desires or selfish ends. Such teachings naturally left a deep impression on the minds of his children. He wanted them to pursue these principles in their everyday life when they grew up. These were not

## CHILDHOOD

mere preachings, for parents Prakash Chandra and Aghore Kamini actually practised these ideals in their lives. We have already seen how one day child Bidhan and his brothers and sister were made to starve because the money for purchasing foodstuffs had not been dedicated to God. It was under such Spartan discipline that Bidhan grew up.

As a child, Bidhan was afraid of darkness,—a reaction, perhaps, to all the ghost stories which one hears in the early stages of life. Here, too, his parents impressed on him that nothing could happen to a human being in darkness if he appealed for divine help and he was taught to repeat God's name in times of darkness. It was not only helpful to keep away the fear of physical darkness, but also of mental darkness, and incidentally it developed a faith in Providence and hope in Him. The examples of the parents who lived upto their precepts helped the children to grow up, fearless of dangers and with abiding faith in the Almighty. From tender years Bidhan and his brothers and sisters joined the daily morning prayers of their own accord, without any compulsion.

Bidhan's grandmother used to call him 'Bhajan', which meant devotional song. His elder brother was called 'Sadhan', meaning self-discipline. One day while at worship child Bidhan heard his father saying in the course of his prayers that he had "little of Bhajan and less of Sadhan", meaning, of course, that there was not enough of religious fervour and self-discipline in him. Not understanding the implications of the prayers, Bidhan told his father at the conclusion of the prayer that he had both 'Bhajan' and 'Sadhan', meaning he and his brother.

Bidhan realised from early life that his father was not rich, though he earned a modest salary. There were quite a number of other children in the house, mostly orphans, who were not treated in any way different from the actual members of the family. As a result, a feeling of comradeship and kinship grew and existed in the house. Their food, clothing and other things came from a common

pool and Bidhan and his brothers, though they were the children of a well-placed Government gazetted officer, never felt that they were in any way distinct or separate from the rest of the little ones in the house, which was named 'Aghore Paribar', meaning Aghore family. From very tender age Bidhan and his brothers were made to realise that they had no special position or superior status in the family. Thus it was shown to Bidhan by his parents that a family was not necessarily composed of blood relations only, but that it could exist on mutual love and understanding among different people. The spirit of 'give and take' was inculcated in the children from their tender years and they were taught and even encouraged to give away what was precious, to them, freely and willingly.

It so happened that one night about 2 a.m. a person came to the house, wanting mother Aghore Kamini to go to the bedside of a poor woman in labour. As a child, Bidhan saw his mother go out of the house at that hour of night with a servant carrying a lantern, a broom and some clothes and disinfectants. It produced a lasting impression on child Bidhan's mind when he learnt the next day that his mother had swept the floors of the room where the poor woman lived, attended to the delivery of her child, put clean clothes on the woman and returned four hours later. There and then it convinced the young child that to serve others was a great joy, for his mother looked quite happy after having done this much to a sister in difficulty.

In another case, a man belonging to a circus party had an attack of pneumonia. There was no one to attend on him and Aghore Kamini, on hearing of it, brought him to her house, and all the children shared in the nursing of the patient. Bidhan as a little child took a great interest in attending on this sick man.

Thus was engendered in him the idea and ideal of service to others. He has been taught to give his best when giving. Charity, love, affection and understanding of human beings formed the main principles of the family. These ideas took



Dr. Roy (extreme right) sitting beside his father's dead body  
brothers Subodh and Sadhan are next to him



Dr. Roy (extreme right) sitting beside the dead body of his mother  
Father Prakash Chandra Roy and his brothers are also in the picture



## CHILDHOOD

root in young Bidhan's mind, later to be developed into active efforts in the various fields in which he worked in life.

As a child, Bidhan was sensitive and inherited from his parents the desire to be of service to others. His eldest brother, Subodh, having been four years older than him, Bidhan kept company with his next brother, Sadhan, who was only two and a half years senior to him. They were together in work and play and he used to accompany Sadhan to the village 'Pathsala' (Elementary School) where he learnt to read and write the Bengali language. Although it was in Bihar, the medium of instruction in the village school was then Bengali. Later, the two brothers, Bidhan and Sadhan, got admitted to the lower class of a High English School, as in those days there were no Primary Schools in Bihar.

## CHAPTER V

### BOYHOOD

The physical weakness of Bidhan's childhood continued in his boyhood. As a boy, Bidhan was highly sensitive and very impressionable. Every story he heard reacted on his mind. When he was eight or nine, an interesting incident happened.

On one occasion while the family was staying in a village about twenty miles from the town, Bidhan's mother related to them a story of her childhood when she took a plum which tasted bitter. Her relations suspected that it was bitten by snake and she fainted away after eating it. She was given salt-water and albumen-water to neutralise the effect of the poison, and she recovered. After completing the story, they sat for lunch and young Bidhan felt that a mango piece which he ate tasted bitter. He immediately left the table, sat on the floor and called for salt-water. The symptom aggravated when his brothers also tasted the piece of mango and declared that they too thought it bitter in taste. Strong-willed father Prakash Chandra understanding the situation ate the rest of the mango piece in their presence and gravely declared that it was not bitter. He ate more of it and reiterated that there was nothing bad in it. That saved the situation and there was no more demand for salt-water or albumen-water and Bidhan and his brothers returned to the table and finished the lunch. It shows how impressionable young Bidhan was. That apart, he was always curious to find out the reality of things. In fact, everybody is anxious to know more about what exists hidden from us. Philosophers delve into the region of the unknown, poets sing of the past, present and future, as also of the secrets of nature, and scientists employ their knowledge to discover the mysteries of the physical world.

## BOYHOOD

In the inquisitive mood of the young, Bidhan and his brothers often used to play with the planchette and were very excited over this pastime, attributing supernatural powers to the mechanism. One day while they were emotionally excited at the answers the planchette wrote, their father came into the room and offered to show them that there was nothing mysterious about it. He placed one finger over the board and thus counteracted all their efforts to move the planchette. Thus was the myth of the planchette exploded and their fun ended. But it made young Bidhan realise that one man's will could counterbalance the efforts of many.

As a boy, Bidhan did not show any exceptional brilliance, though in intelligence he was above the average. Minor incidents of early days left a deep impression on his mind. While still a school boy, he once entered for a 100 yards flat race. He was at that time puny and undersized for his age and younger than many of the other competitors in the sport. Though he had no hope to win the race against the bigger boys, what mortified him most was the attempt of others to shut out all his chances. A senior boy and his brother held their hands between them and blocked Bidhan. Recalling the incident, Bidhan Chandra Roy in later life said: "How in life people moving in groups deliberately obstruct others in their efforts to progress!"

Impressions of boyhood of a sensitive mind very often last throughout life. Young Bidhan in his boyhood was fond of pets and particularly dogs. A friend and a fellow student, who had a pet dog, was one day bitten by it and got hydrophobia and died six weeks later. That produced an immense effect on Bidhan's young mind and he developed an aversion to dogs which he has never been able to shake off completely, though in recent years he has tolerated a friend's Alsatian in his house.

Even as a boy, Bidhan took life very seriously. He was regular in his school duties and needed no parental threats or coaxing to study his lessons at home or in the class. But as he grew a little older, he became very fond of games. As

a student in the High School, he had no definite ambition and did not realise his full responsibility. He did not consider examination to be a very serious affair. On the last day of the Entrance examination while appearing for the Drawing test he left it half-done, hearing the boom of a football kicked in the adjacent playground, and joined the game. Obviously he did not think that passing the examination was a serious matter. Nevertheless, he passed the Entrance and joined F.A.

Bidhan lost his mother when he was hardly fourteen. Even at that age he realised how her life and example had influenced him and his brothers and sisters. Mother Aghore Kamini suffered pain and agony for nearly three days before she died. Recalling those sad memories of his boyhood, Bidhan one day observed:

"I remember my mother telling father on the morning of her death, 'I see tears in your eyes ; why those tears? I am with you and will remain with you always. Now, go to the Prayer Room, compose yourself and come to me, so that I could die happy.' I saw my father soon after in the Prayer Hall. And after a while he came back to mother, calm and composed, and stood by her bedside. She lived for a few hours more, and then died peacefully."

After his mother's death, the children were looked after by their father. He used to tell them that he would only guide them and give them directions until they attained the age of eighteen.

During holidays Bidhan and his brothers were made to do even the household work. Thus they had to sweep the floor, dust the furniture, groom and feed the horse and even clean utensils, do the cooking and lift up water from the well. That was not all. Father Prakash Chandra enforced on them the service that Mahatma Gandhi all along did himself and desired his followers to do themselves. Even the comodes in the house were to be cleaned by the children. There was no compulsion about doing any work, nor even any direction was given to them. Only they were told that

## BOYHOOD

such duties developed one's faculties. The words of their father were like law to them. They loved, respected and revered him. Not for once could Bidhan remember having ever been scolded by his father. To the children his mere displeasure was a punishment sufficient and severe enough to keep them on the right track.

This early training helped Bidhan considerably in his student days and later in his professional and political career.

## CHAPTER VI

### STUDENT LIFE IN CALCUTTA

Until he joined the Medical College, Bidhan's early school and undergraduate life was uneventful. In due course he passed both the F.A. and B.A. examinations. He had then no ambition for any particular profession. Nevertheless, he had almost his father's dislike for law, and he did not want to enter the Government service either. It was the wish and advice of his father Prakash Chandra that none of his children should go in for Government service. After Bidhan had graduated from Patna, he had to decide for himself the course of future studies to qualify for a profession. At that age, he had no special preference for Medicine or Engineering and he applied simultaneously for admission to the Calcutta Medical College and to the Bengal Engineering College. Probably he would have been an Engineer had he not got the admission card from the Medical College a few hours before he got it from the Engineering College. As he told his father, he had then no special liking for either, but he hoped to do his best whichever he took up.

In June 1901 Bidhan came to Calcutta to join the Medical College. Having been brought up in the suburban atmosphere of Bankipore, Gaya and Motihari, young Bidhan was a little nervous when he came to the big city and suffered from a sense of inferiority, not possessing the advantages of those who belonged to Calcutta who were naturally familiar with the student life there. Moreover, physically he still remained a weakling. Financially he suffered greater handicaps, as medical education even in those days was expensive.

On the day he joined the Medical College, the first thing that attracted his attention was a board in the Dissection Hall with the inscription: "Whatever thy hands findeth to do, do it with thy might." It made a lasting impression on him

## STUDENT LIFE IN CALCUTTA

and even to this day he would admit that these words were the source of inspiration in his future career.

\*On the very day of his arrival in Calcutta he got himself admitted in the Young Men's Christian Association Hostel next to the Presidency College. Here he had to share the room with a senior student of the Medical College. An interesting incident occurred even on the very first day of his stay in the hostel.

Having been physically weak, any deviation from the normal diet or exposure to damp and rain invariably made Bidhan suffer from cold and fever. There was only one window to his room on the South and a door on the North. As the window was kept open, damp air came in from the South and apprehensive of the consequences, Bidhan pleaded with his room-mate to close the window, as otherwise he would get fever. The senior fellow objected and argued that if it was closed, he would get fever. Naturally, the older student's wishes prevailed. The window was kept open and, sure enough, Bidhan got fever next day. Unmindful of it, his room-mate continued to keep the window open in spite of bad weather, and his companion's fever. After suffering from repeated attacks, Bidhan found out that his sensitiveness to damp and cold weather had gone. Recalling this incident, he said that it demonstrated the theory that if one was alert and not abnormally sensitive, he could get over many disabilities of mind and body.

His first year in the Medical College passed off smoothly, though not without hardships. He used to get some remittance from his father to meet his expenses but he had to live very frugally.

From the second year onwards his father was not in a position to send him much money, as he had already retired from service and had to meet the expenses of the higher education of his other sons in England. Naturally, Bidhan had to find out for himself the money to meet all the expenses of his medical studies. Luckily he obtained a scholarship through all the next four years of his medical studies. Even

DR. B. C. ROY

that was not enough to meet all the expenses of board and lodging and College fees, not to speak of buying books and instruments.

In all the five years of his studies in the Medical College Bidhan could purchase only one Medical book for Rs. 5/-. He had to depend upon copying notes from text books borrowed from different friends who were more favourably placed than himself, or to utilise the College library. In all, his life he had not forgotten those days of penury and want, and in better circumstances he helped many a poor student with funds for the purchase of books.

While in the second year class, the Professor of Surgery and the Senior Demonstrator of Anatomy took a fancy to him. They saw in him an earnest, enthusiastic young student. They also understood his financial handicaps. So they gave him an opportunity to earn something as a student assistant or as a male nurse whenever they did any surgical operation in a private house. Often Bidhan had to work from eight in the morning to eight in the evening to earn Rs. 8/-. What he got during the winter months, when such operations were usually performed, used to be sufficient to provide some relief to his depleted resources for the rest of the year. He realised during the early years of his medical career that everyone who intended to join the profession must work seriously and with a purpose. Having got over his bodily sensitiveness to irregularities and physical infirmities, he began to attend to his daily tasks with single-minded devotion.

The brilliance that lay dormant in Bidhan was taking shape in the Medical College. The inscription in the Dissection Hall was vibrating in his ears and to it was added, another in the Overtoun Hall attached to the Y.M.C.A., which read: "Brought by the power of prayer." It made him realise early in life that to have the "might" to do one's duty, the "power of prayer" was necessary.

Though Bidhan was fond of jokes and laughter and had a sense of humour like other students, he put the ideal of a purposeful life before him and wanted to equip himself for

## STUDENT LIFE IN CALCUTTA

the service of humanity. As a student in the Medical College he earned a reputation for steadfastness and sincerity of purpose. But the extraordinary brilliance of his future career was not even a matter of guess in those days. He dreamt no dreams; put his heart and soul to the task of the day and was satisfied if it was rightly done.

Young Bidhan was liked by students and teachers alike. Some of his teachers used occasionally to tell him that they saw a brilliant future for him. Once in the second year while the students were dissecting in the Anatomy hall, the Principal, General Bomford, came for inspection. There was naturally a commotion among the students, particularly because besides being their Principal, General Bomford was regarded by them as a man of great erudition, wisdom and character. While most young people would like to attract the attention of a big man like Bomford, Bidhan wanted to remain unnoticed, and he went on with his dissection work. The General stopped opposite his table and asked him a very funny question, "Are you a good student?" Bidhan remained silent, not knowing what to answer. The Demonstrator who accompanied the Principal told Bomford what he knew about this particular student. General Bomford then told Bidhan, "We expect many things from you, Babu" and walked off. It must have been an intuitive prediction. However, those words of General Bomford always rang in Bidhan's ears in his subsequent life in the profession.

Another great personality amongst his Professors with whom he came in contact and who influenced him more vitally in his life was the Second Principal, Col. Lukis. And of Col. Lukis no better tribute could be paid than in the words of Bidhan Chandra Roy himself: "I keep his portrait always in front of my seat in my consultation room, as he was the guide and inspirer of my life who developed the manhood in me, who made me honour myself, who roused the latent faculties in me and baptized me to a consecrated life of service to my country."

And, strangely enough, it was this Englishman, Col. Lukis,

DR. B. C. ROY

who first instilled in Bidhan the spirit of nationalism. Those were the days when the National movement was rising up against Lord Curzon's supercilious attitude towards the people. Though Lukis and Curzon were close friends, they had different visions of the future of India. Col. Lukis was of the opinion that even the future of the medical profession would be in the hands of Indians, and felt within himself that the young man Bidhan Chandra Roy, on whom he lavished his affection and guidance, would one day lead that profession. By his own example, Col. Lukis infused into Bidhan the spirit of sacrifice and service to fellowmen, which had since survived onslaughts from many quarters through decades. Lukis laid down for Bidhan a code of moral conduct in the professional life, which he has never forgot. And Bidhan had always kept before him that code which said,—

"A heart that never hardens,  
A temper that never tires,  
A touch that never hurts."

It was while Bidhan was still in the Medical College that the partition of Bengal was announced in 1904. The Nationalist movement inspired by Shri Aurobindo was also taking shape in Bengal. It was hardly possible for any youth to remain unaffected by the spirit of the day. Bidhan, like many of his fellow-students, had to control his emotions on the self-realisation that he could better serve the cause of the nation by qualifying himself for the profession than by prematurely rushing to politics.

On one occasion in 1904 Bidhan and a fellow-boarder were returning to Calcutta from Burdwan where they had gone to see a friend. They entered an inter-class railway compartment which was full up, with a number of people standing, and yet an Anglo-Indian and his wife were lying on two benches which were really meant to provide only sitting accommodation. Bidhan and his friend woke up the gentleman and asked him to give them also sitting space. The couple protested, because in those days Anglo-Indians

## STUDENT LIFE IN CALCUTTA

considered themselves a more privileged set of people than Indians. The gentleman abused Bidhan's friend and a scuffle ensued. The medical students won the melee and Bidhan recalling the incident remarked, "We felt we had already won the struggle with the British masters."

The nationalism of those days was not tinged with narrow racialism. Many medical students, including Bidhan Chandra Roy, were long under the spell of what may be called British culture and mode of life. Bidhan could hardly afford the proper English costume and yet he was disposed to ape the English dress. To live like an Englishman, however imperfect the imitation be, at one time seemed to be the desideratum of existence. He confessed that he did not know why he never smoked or drank liquors, though he was impressed with the fact that a cigarette in the mouth and a peg of whisky in the hand were inseparable from English life. There is a joke about Bidhan in his desire to imitate the Englishman. For some time he used to call himself 'Benjamin Charles Roy'. It must have been the influence of the Nationalist movement during the latter part of his Medical College days that served to check in him and his friends the tendency to imitate the English manners. Col. Lukis, too, was of help to him in this direction. In fact, Lukis made his students and particularly Bidhan appreciate what was only good in English life.

While one Englishman inspired him, with another he had quite an unpleasant experience. One incident happened towards the close of his student days in the Medical College, which threatened to break his career but for the timely intervention and guidance of Col. Lukis. About a fortnight before the final M.B. Examination, one morning Bidhan was standing at the gate of the Medical College when the brougham of Col. Peck, Professor of Midwifery, emerged out of the gate. The electric tramway service had just started operating in the College Square. Although a tramcar was then moving, the coachman of Col. Peck tried to cross the road without warning. Probably he thought that a

Sahib's carriage had priority even on public roads. The inevitable happened, the brougham was smashed though none was injured. The Professor got out of his carriage and seeing Bidhan standing at the gate, asked him whether he had not seen the accident. When he answered in the affirmative, Col. Peck asked, "Was not the tramcar moving at a speed of thirty miles an hour?" Bidhan said, "No" and added that in his view the mistake was with the coachman. Irritated, the Professor went away and after a week he again enquired of Bidhan if he would care to appear as a witness on his side in the suit against the Tramways Co. for damages. On being told that he would only speak the truth, the Professor became more angry and Bidhan was not called as a witness. A week later came the final M.B. examination. The written part was over and Bidhan had to appear for the *viva voce* before Col. Peck, who was red with anger and even before Bidhan could begin answering a question, he started shouting at him and turned him out of the room, and for the first time in his life, Bidhan had the taste of failure. He was depressed beyond measure but Col. Lukis, who understood the situation, gave him courage and advised him to appear at the forthcoming L.M.S. qualifying examination to be held a fortnight later, and then sit for the M.D. examination two years later. Bidhan was hesitant, because he would have to face the same examiner again, but things happened otherwise. Probably Col. Lukis had a word with Col. Peck on the affair and the Professor must have realised that he had been unjust to his truthful pupil. In any case, when after a fortnight, Bidhan appeared again before the Professor of Midwifery he found him to be sweetness personified. Col. Peck even asked Bidhan why he did not approach him for a reconsideration of his case for the M.B. He passed the L.M.S. examination without a hitch.

Immediately after his graduation in Medicine in 1906, Bidhan joined the Provincial Medical Service as an Assistant Surgeon and was appointed House Physician to Col. Lukis.

## STUDENT LIFE IN CALCUTTA

It is probable that this post was then specially created by Lukis to accommodate his favourite pupil. Prof. Lukis had often given Bidhan, even as a student, the task of lecturing to junior students. Thus he got the fullest opportunity of teaching students in the Clinical classes and became very intimate with them. No doubt, they appreciated his services and loved him. It gave him another advantage, for after his graduation he began to get a practice through his students.

The remarkable thing about young Dr' Bidhan was that he was not afraid of hard work. He used to do any and every work in the hospital, whether it was in his own Department or elsewhere. And when he went to a patient, he did not merely prescribe or give directions regarding diet and nursing, but he would himself give a bath, prepare food or otherwise nurse the patient, as in those days the nursing service was very poor. It will interest readers to know that when Bidhan started his practice, his fee was no more than Rs. 2/-. Thus, at the very beginning of his professional career, he earned the reputation of being a doctor with sympathy for his patients. In this matter, too, Col. Lukis was his inspirer and it helped Bidhan considerably in his practice. His chief did something more. He gave Bidhan a great push by openly applauding his qualifications as a medical practitioner.

Bidhan remained as a House Physician to Col. Lukis for two years. Along with his hospital duties, he was also preparing a thesis of original work for his M.D., which left him little time for private practice. Often he had to toil seventeen or eighteen hours a day, in order to get through his work, and earn some money to maintain himself. His salary then was only Rs. 99/10/- a month. He had to maintain a house and meet all the other expenses and then keep in reserve something to fulfil his higher ambition to go to England for further studies in Medicine.

The idea of going abroad was more or less nebulous in him at that time, because he did not know what particular examinations he would take in England, or whether to go

in for the Indian Medical Service. Bidhan was a poor young man and entry into the Indian Medical Service was a great temptation for him, particularly because his predecessor in the House Physician's post had just qualified himself for the I.M.S. Apart from financial prospects which the I.M.S. held out in those days it also ensured a superior status to its members in the medical profession, as all the big medical men then belonged to this Service. Even though Bidhan had no definite idea as to what he would do in England, he decided to apply to the Government for extraordinary leave without salary for two years and three months, to enable him to finish whatever course he intended to pursue in England. His application for leave was promptly rejected, mainly on the ground that as he had served the Government for only two years, he had no claim for any leave and certainly not for leave for two years. It was quite natural for him to approach his patron, Col. Lukis, for advice, as he was always very keen to encourage his favourite pupil in his desire to have higher training in Medicine outside India. Col. Lukis suggested that he should apply to the Lieutenant Governor of the province for re-consideration on the ground that while the members of the Indian Medical Service would get leave with pay and study allowance even if they had done only two years of service, he was denied leave even without pay. Col. Lukis was of the view that there should be no discrimination in this matter between members of the Indian Medical Service and the Provincial Medical Service. Col. Lukis was one of the few men who had always been anxious to raise the status of the Medical profession in every possible manner and to give Indians equal opportunities and chances to reach the topmost level. Unlike some of his narrow-minded colleagues at the time, this English medical man visualised that the future of the medical profession in India lay in the hands of Indians.

Bidhan applied to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal for reconsideration of his application for leave. He was not quite sure whether the Head of the State would give any

## STUDENT LIFE IN CALCUTTA

consideration to an application of this nature from a member of the Subordinate Service. Moreover, it was virtually an appeal against the decision of the Medical Department. It was a big surprise to young Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy to receive a letter from the Private Secretary to 'His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal' saying that "His Honour had been pleased to grant" him the leave that he had asked for and "had directed the Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals to make necessary arrangements." A bigger surprise was for him to know later that Col. Lukis had actually asked for and obtained an interview with the Lieutenant Governor and induced him to reverse the decision of the Medical Department.

Having obtained the leave, the next problem for Bidhan was to arrange his passage. First, he telephoned to the Steamer Company to reserve for him a berth on a ship which was to leave Calcutta a day after the commencement of his leave. The berth was reserved but ten days before the date of sailing when he enquired of the Steamer Company about the details of his passage and the amount of money to be paid for it, he was promptly asked by an officer of the Company over the 'phone whether the berth was wanted for a European or an Indian. As soon as he said that it was for an Indian, the officer replied that he would have to pay for two berths or get a companion, as they could not possibly make reservation for a European and an Indian in the same cabin. When he asked for the reason, he was told that instructions from the Company's headquarters in England were as indicated. Bidhan replied that he could not possibly pay for two berths, nor could he find a companion at such short notice. The officer of the Shipping Company promptly said, "We regret we cannot find a berth for you in this Steamer." That created a further problem, as he would be losing the days of his leave if he did not go by that Steamer.

As usual, Col. Lukis, enquired about his departure and of the Steamer on which he had booked his berth. When he was told about the new difficulty that had arisen, due to the

decision of the Shipping Company, Lukis was very insistent that this should not be allowed to go unchallenged, because he felt that there was no reason why an Englishman should object to travel with an Indian "who was ordinarily cleaner than the Englishman, although his skin might be darker." Lukis himself went to the General Manager of the Shipping Company and insisted that Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy should be given a berth in that particular Steamer. They agreed to give him a berth but laid down the condition that no other passenger would be allowed to travel in his cabin. Recalling the incident, Dr. B. C. Roy confessed, "I felt my self-confidence was enhanced through this encounter with the Britishers. Each incident of this type not only solved my immediate problem, but also gave me self-confidence in any struggle against the foreigners. This psychology was essential to develop the self-respect of a people."

Although the date of his departure for England was fixed, Bidhan had not yet decided what he was to do while in England. Here, again, Col. Lukis came to his help. He enquired of Bidhan about his financial position. Regarding the discussion he had with Col. Lukis that day, Bidhan reveals:

"His approach was very practical and direct. When he heard that I had very little to depend upon, he asked me whether I could struggle for a while. When I replied in the affirmative, he said that he himself regretted the day on which he entered the Indian Medical Service and, therefore, he would not advise me to go into that Service. If I entered the I.M.S., he warned me, I would not be able to get back into Calcutta for many, many years, if at all. And, he added, 'If I am a good prophet, the Medical Service in Calcutta would be in the hands of Indians within the next ten years, and if that be so, it would be desirable that you should be in Calcutta to take a share in this practice.' It was, therefore, he suggested, desirable that I should not enter the Indian Medical Service but appear for the M.R.C.P. (London)



**FAMILY GROUP**

Sitting —Prakash Chandra Roy (father) and standing (from Right to Left) sons—Subodh, Sadhan and Bidhan, and nephew Mahatap.



## STUDENT LIFE IN CALCUTTA

and F.R.C.S. (England). His advice was precious to me and I decided, perhaps without counting the cost, to go to England for these two examinations. I said ‘without counting the cost’, because it was only when I had joined the courses that I discovered that the fees for each one of these examinations were 40 guineas, *i.e.*, 80 guineas for both. And this sum practically covered the whole of the money that I had collected to meet all my expenses in England. But once I had decided to do the job, I sailed for England in the “City of Glasgow” on the 22nd of February, 1909.”

## CHAPTER VII

### IN ENGLAND

Bidhan arrived in England towards the end of March 1909 and the question arose as to the Institution which he was to join. His Principal Col. Lukis had been a student of St. Bartholomews and many of his other Professors in Calcutta Medical College also belonged to that Institution. They all gave him introduction to the Dean of St. Bartholomews Hospital and also to some of the other Professors there. The first thing he did was to seek an interview with the Dean, Dr. Shore. It was then that he found out that this College was probably the most expensive of all the medical institutions in London. In the state of his poor financial resources he could hardly afford to join this Institution. And yet having made up his mind to join it, he approached the Dean of the Hospital for admission. Dr. Shore heard about his qualifications and read the letters of introduction. But he told Bidhan frankly that it was not possible for him to get admission in that College and advised him to try other hospitals in London. Determined as Bidhan was, the first refusal did not discourage him. He came away dissatisfied but not without hope of ultimately entering this Institution. He went to the Dean again after two days. At that time Dr. Shore asked him about the period that he had decided to stay in England for medical studies. On being told that he had obtained leave for two years and three months and that he intended to appear for the M.R.C.P. (London) and F.R.C.S. (England) Examinations, the Dean said that the time was too short. Moreover, he added, there were not many students in England who took both these degrees in Medicine and Surgery together. Dr. Shore frankly told Bidhan that he was too ambitious. Taking courage, Bidhan told the Dean that nothing had been achieved in this world

## IN ENGLAND

without ambition properly canalised and directed. But the Dean refused to admit him. Bidhan was not the man to accept the refusal and a couple of days later, he again went to the Dean who this time pointed out to him that the quota of foreign students had already been filled up. Against that Bidhan argued that only the day before a Negro from South Africa who had applied later, was admitted. The Dean replied that the Negro had been recommended by Lord Milne, and therefore he had to be taken in. Although Bidhan did not possess a letter from such a high personage, he assured Dr. Shore of the intensity of his longing to get admitted to his Institution. Again, he had to go away disappointed. But he persisted in his endeavour and continued to knock at the door of the Dean whom he had seen more than thirty times in the course of a month and a half, much to the annoyance of Dr. Shore. One day, the Dean turned round and asked him to bring the fees for his admission. Though happy with this announcement, he found that the fees were 40 guineas—an amount which was much too big for his slender purse. Bidhan then requested Dr. Shore to take only three months' fees in advance. The Dean agreed and asked him to bring 10 guineas next day, which he did. He was admitted to St. Bartholomews.

Bidhan joined the Institution with a determination, and tried to pick up as much knowledge as he possibly could during his stay there. Before he appeared for the F.R.C.S. Examination in Anatomy and Physiology, he decided to dissect a human body over again. He had done the usual course of dissection when he was a student of the Calcutta Medical College. It was a matter of surprise to some of his fellow-students that he should start dissecting the whole body over again. Fortunately he had a fellow student who was also a Medical Practitioner from Venezuela and the two, of them decided to start dissection right from the beginning. "It was a curious experience," reveals Dr. B. C. Roy. "What dissections we did when we were students, we had managed to forget during the five or six years since we completed the

dissections. It was an advantage to have done some clinical work before I started dissection again."

In London, the months of May and June are regarded in a medical institution as holidays and practically no students attended the College during this period. It was a great opportunity for the two students to start dissection at 10 o'clock in the morning and continue till 5 in the afternoon. Neither of them took any lunch—Bidhan, because he did not have any money to pay for it, and the Venezuelan, because he was not in the habit of taking any lunch.

Bidhan felt that he should also know something about the subjects in which the training in India at that time was deficient. One such was skin diseases. So, he got himself employed as an Honorary Clinical Assistant to the Professor of Skin Diseases and attended his clinics three times a week from 8 A.M. to 10 A.M. Thus his days were fully occupied in the College and by the time he had finished his work in the Dissection Room he was too tired to do anything else, and so he would go straight home. It was a curious experience to both the students that they two were the only occupants of the very large Dissection Hall. They persisted in their endeavour to know Anatomy thoroughly. After two months of dissection, they were satisfied that they had learnt a lot. Then came up an intriguing question, the payment for the dead body. The taxidermist of the Anatomy Hall, a man called Hallett, told Bidhan that he would have to pay 12 guineas for the dead body (the cost of which in Calcutta Medical College was Rs. 6/-). That was a great problem for Bidhan's slender purse. The next day he went to see his Professor of Anatomy, Dr. Addison, and asked him about the fees he had to pay for the dead body. Dr. Addison relieved him of the worry and said that he need not pay anything. The first reaction of Bidhan was that the Professor was moved to pity by his indigent appearance, with clothes that were not by any means fashionable and worn in a manner which indicated that he was not flush with money. So, Bidhan thought, the Professor was giving him a

concession. Internally he resented this and told Dr. Addison that he was able to pay for the dead body. Dr. Addison merely replied with his characteristic geniality, "Do you recall that you had difficulties in getting yourself admitted in this College three months ago? You went to the Dean on many occasions but you were refused admission." Then he revealed that he was a Member of the Selection Committee for admitting students in the College and that he was repeatedly told by the Dean that there was a fellow from Bengal who wanted admission into this College and this College alone, but that he could not find a place for him. Dr. Addison added that it was he who suggested to the Dean that a chance might be given to this youngster from Bengal to fulfil his desire of getting admitted into the College for higher training in Medicine. Naturally he was interested in seeing how the young man from Bengal used his time after admission into the Institution. He further revealed that he had noticed Bidhan and the Venezuelan student dissecting the body. Before the two students came to the College for their daily work, Dr. Addison often used to go very early in the morning to the Dissection Room and to open up the bandaged dissected parts to find out how they were progressing. He was satisfied that these two were utilising their opportunities for study of Anatomy to the best advantage, and felt that the parts they had dissected were good enough for demonstration purposes for the students. In that view of things, Dr. Addison felt that as in the case of bodies used by Demonstrators for dissecting parts for teaching were not charged, similarly no charges need be levied for the body they had used. "It was a great relief from the financial point of view," recalls Dr. B. C. Roy, "but I was very much struck by the manner in which this relief was given."

Dr. Addison, the world-famous Anatomist, entered Parliament in 1910 as a Liberal Member from a Labour constituency and subsequently during the first World War he joined the Cabinet and later he was elevated to the Peerage.

#### DR. B. C. ROY

The friendship that was established between Dr. Addison (later Lord Addison) and Dr. B. C. Roy continued till the fifties when Dr. Addison died of cancer.

Bidhan joined the classes in Physiology also. He took private coaching in the subjects of Anatomy and Physiology, as he was told that the examinations in these two subjects in the Primary Fellowship were very stiff.

After three months were over, he went to the Dean and told him that he was ready to pay the next instalment of fees for the Hospital. It surprised Bidhan when the Dean told him that he had decided not to charge any fee from him and that he could stay and work in the College and the Hospitals as long as he intended to do so, without having to pay anything. The man who had opposed Bidhan's entry into the College and persistently refused him admission for over a month, now proposed that he could utilise the facilities in the Institution without any payment. Here, again, Bidhan's mind reacted quickly and he felt that the Dean was trying to show him some favour. He was not prepared to accept it without a challenge. The Dean, however, quietly told him that he had watched the career of the young man from Bengal during the past three months and had noticed that besides doing his work for the Primary Fellowship, he was also acting as the Clinical Assistant in the Department of Skin. This Department generally employed a man as Clinical Assistant to whom £60 a year was paid by way of allowances, and as Bidhan had been doing the same job without remuneration, the Dean felt that it was only right and proper that he should be allowed facilities for working in the Hospital without payment. "It was a wonderful situation," says Dr. B. C. Roy. "I felt that the unseen hands of Providence were helping me in my training in England in spite of the meagreness of my resources."

Bidhan gradually came to know Dr. Addison more intimately than in his first encounter. Moreover, Dr. Addison was one of those Englishmen who had liberal and advanced views on many subjects, which Bidhan appreciated. When

## IN ENGLAND

he became a candidate for Parliament from Hoxton, Dr. Roy helped him materially in the elections by working for him, which, incidentally, gave him a first-hand knowledge of electioneering methods in England.

He was determined to get through the examinations within the shortest possible period of time. As a matter of fact, he was able to finish both the M.R.C.P. and F.R.C.S. within the period of his leave of two years and three months.

"I felt happy that I succeeded in doing what I had planned," confessed Dr. Bidhan Roy. "It increased my self-confidence tremendously and I often felt the correctness of the adage: 'Man can do whatever man has done,' provided that 'whatever his hands findeth is done with all his might'."

Whilst in the College, he came in touch with various Professors of the different Departments and with quite a number of them he became intimately acquainted. "I have always carried the sweetest reflections of those days," he would say. Unfortunately, most of those whom he contacted in the College during the years 1909-10 are all dead. "But I retain the richest memories of their association with me." While the F.R.C.S. Examination exacted most of his time and was a great strain on him, as he had done little work in Surgery, he took the Examination for the M.R.C.P. with great ease. He hardly studied for more than two or three months for it and he was informed by Sir Thomas Barlow, the President of the Royal College of Physicians, who presided over the Examination, that he had stood first in it.

Bidhan had little or no social life while he was a student in London. For one thing, there was not enough money for it and, for another, he was too engrossed in his studies. Throughout the period of two years that he stayed in London, he had not only to deny himself even the barest comfort but often he had to leave London for three or four days to take up some *locum tenens* work for any practitioner who might be going for a holiday, and thus earn a little money. This helped him materially. His expenses for board and lodging were perhaps the minimum that any

#### DR. B. C. ROY

student paid in London. The landlady was so grateful to him for treating her little daughter free soon after he took up residence at her house that she agreed to keep Dr. Roy as a lodger on 16 shillings a week, or a little over £3 a month. It was indeed a great relief and he stayed there for the whole period of two years and three months and got as much attention as he required, with the meagre contribution he made.

Despite his scanty resources, he was able to attain his objective. He finished both the M.R.C.P. and F.R.C.S. by May 1911. Then, one day he thought he should interview Dr. Shore and convey his thanks for what the Dean and the Institution had done for him. Dr. Shore gave him a characteristic reply.

"Dr. Roy, I am really ashamed of my conduct in not admitting you into this Institution when you came to me first. I had rejected your application, because I felt, as you came from Bengal and our experience with other Bengali students had not been very happy, that you might, if admitted, lower the tradition of this College. Therefore, I was resisting your entry into this Institution. But I am glad to tell you that you are perhaps one of the very few students who have obtained both the degrees within such a short period of time. I will, therefore, make amends for my past conduct. I would, in future, admit any student who obtains a letter of introduction from you, without any question."

Since then, scores of students have got themselves admitted into the Institution with letters from Dr. Roy. Such admissions were always made unconditionally. Many of the prominent members of the medical profession practising in West Bengal or in other parts of India, had the opportunity of getting their training in this splendid Institution, St. Bartholomews, on Dr. Roy's recommendation. Undoubtedly, he feels that this was a sufficient compensation for the troubles he had to face before being admitted into that College.





DR. B. C. ROY  
(1911)

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE STRUGGLE

As a student in the Medical College and after his graduation from it, Bidhan had occasions to get in close touch with members of the Indian Medical Service, particularly those who were Britishers. Each British member of the Service, Bidhan recalls, seemed to give an impression that he had a mission to perform and that he was destined to give his expert knowledge in Medicine for the benefit of the people of this country and to save them from death. Thus each Britisher, big or small, belonging to the Service regarded himself as a member of *Corps-de-Reserve* who was destined to govern India. It was easy to understand that this assignment for helping Indians was regarded by them as an exclusive consignment. Not all of them, however, acted with this feeling of superiority complex. Some of them were definitely exceptions to the general rule.

Bidhan would recall two incidents when as a student he came in close contact with British members of the Indian Medical Service. When he was in the second-year class, he had missed paying the dissection fees within time. Obviously he had missed the Notice put up on the board that all such fees should be deposited on a Saturday, as he was ill for some seven days. When he went to the College on the following Monday, he saw a Notice put up on the board that those who had not paid their dissection fees on Saturday would have to pay the same with a fine of Re. 1/-. Bidhan's financial difficulty was such at the time that even the payment of an extra rupee was a hardship. So he applied to the officiating Principal, Col. Drury, for remission of this fine in consideration of the fact that he had been ill for seven days and that he could not see the Notice. When he went to the College office at mid-day to find out the result of his appli-

cation to the Principal he was shown the order of Col. Drury that he must pay the fine. Meanwhile, at 12 o'clock Col. Bomford had taken charge from the officiating Principal and Bidhan appealed to Bomford against the order of Drury and further submitted that as he was a scholarship-holder and had not drawn his scholarship for several months, the amount of Rs. 6/- was quite secure. Col. Bomford wrote on his application, "This seems very good reason ; let him pay without a fine." It surprised everybody in the office to find that Bidhan had the courage to appeal against the officiating Principal's order within two hours and to get it reversed. It made a great impression on Bidhan that individuals amongst the European members of the Indian Medical Service had, whatever their other weaknesses might have been, a very keen sense of fairness.

The second occasion Bidhan met Col. Bomford was in the dissection room, about which mention has already been made. It was then that Bomford told him, "I expect many things from you, Babu."

As already seen, Bidhan after passing out of the College was appointed Assistant House Physician to Col. Lukis. On the first afternoon he had joined the post, the Senior House Physician asked Bidhan to take the round in the wards as he had some important outside work. Bidhan was new to the job and he had to depend upon the reports and advice given by the nurses, and gave directions as he thought necessary. When he went upstairs to the European Female Ward, as it was then called, he was told by the nurse on duty that there was an extra bed put in for a patient who arrived in the afternoon. She told him also that the patient was a Jewish lady and, as such, she should have been admitted to the Ezra Hospital building within the Medical College compound, which was meant for Jewish patients. This would save the nurse from the duty of recording the patient in the books and making all other arrangements for the extra bed. Bidhan looked at the Admission Ticket and found that the Admitting Officer, Capt. Megaw, had

## THE STRUGGLE

scribbled something on it. It looked as if he had written "Admit Ezra" which was deciphered by the ward officer as "Admit Extra". So an extra bed in the European Female Ward was provided. Bidhan felt it was just and right that the patient should be transferred to the Ezra Hospital but he did not know how to do it. The nurse told him that all he had to do was to put on the bed ticket the words: "Transfer to Ezra Hospital—By Order" and then sign his name. He did so and came downstairs after seeing the other patients. While he was talking to the other members of the House staff downstairs he was told by a student that Capt. Urwin, who was the Resident Surgeon of the Hospital, had been going round the wards soon after he had left them. Meanwhile, the nurses had changed duties. The new nurse who had come to the European Female Ward evidently complained to Capt. Urwin through the Sister-in-Charge, against the order Bidhan had recorded, because it meant taking steps on her part to transfer the patient to the Ezra Hospital, which, she felt, was rather a difficult job at that hour of the evening. Capt. Urwin scored through Bidhan's order and signed 'J. J. Urwin'. Next morning when he went upstairs he saw what Capt. Urwin had done and felt that he should protest against it. He came downstairs with the ticket in hand and as soon as Col. Lukis came to the Hospital at 8 o'clock in the morning, he told him that while he was thankful to him for appointing him as a House Physician, he was afraid he would not be able to continue the work because of the conduct of the Resident Surgeon. Often the officers of the Indian Medical Service used to override the orders given by Indian members of the staff. Col. Lukis on getting the report, asked the Deputy Superintendent to send for Capt. Urwin and as he came in Lukis told him, "Urwin, what the devil do you mean by cancelling my House Physician's orders?" Then Lukis took Urwin by the arm out to the verandah and said something to him. Bidhan did not hear it but could guess from the face of Urwin that Lukis was rebuking him.

DR. B. C. ROY

Coming back from the verandah, Lukis told Bidhan, "Go back to the wards. Urwin won't touch you any more." Thus ended the first scuffle with a British member of the Indian Medical Service.

Recalling the incident Bidhan said, "I had information that Capt. Urwin whose duty was to submit a confidential report to the Government about the conduct of the House staff in the Hospital had used his position to send a very adverse report about me to the Secretariat. But it had to go through Col. Lukis and I was reliably informed that Lukis scored out that portion of the report about my work and wrote down his own opinion instead and pasted it on to the Confidential files."

On one occasion Col. Lukis was going round the wards and seeing a patient with fever asked Bidhan to examine the blood and to give him Quinine if Malarial parasites were found. In those days finding of Malarial parasites was a great event. Bidhan did examine the blood and found the parasites. Meanwhile, the Resident Physician Capt. Megaw, came up to Bidhan and told him not to give Quinine to that patient because he was making some observations regarding fevers in Bengal and he desired that his observations should not be disturbed by giving Quinine which might mean dropping of temperature. "I mentioned, with pride," reveals Bidhan "the fact that I had discovered Malarial parasites in the blood and I wanted to take the full credit of having done so. Col. Lukis turned round and asked if I had given Quinine. I simply mentioned the fact that according to the desire of Capt. Megaw I had postponed giving Quinine to the patient. Suddenly Col. Lukis flared up and said, 'Who is Capt. Megaw, pray?' I replied, 'Capt. Megaw is the Resident Physician of the College and being his Assistant Physician I had to obey his orders.' Col. Lukis sent for Capt. Megaw and in front of me and a large number of students, said, 'Megaw, the wards are under my charge and in my absence Dr. Roy is in charge of the wards.'

## THE STRUGGLE

In future please do not interfere with the work in the wards.' Capt. Megaw who ultimately rose high up in the Service hierarchy and became the Director-General of Indian Medical Service, with headquarters in Simla, never forgot this incident. It may be that he thought me indiscreet in having given the Principal the report I did, as it brought on him the wrath of Col. Lukis."

- While Bidhan was working in the Hospitals, he was doing some research for a thesis for his M.D. examination. In the process of examining the blood of many types of patients for a particular observation, he came to the Cholera wards of the Hospital. Ordinarily in those days the Cholera wards were not assigned to any particular physician and usually the directions for treatment were given by Col. Leonard Rogers who was then the Pathologist of the Hospital. One day while Bidhan was examining the blood of a Cholera patient in the basement of the Medical College Hospital, Col. Rogers came to him and enquired what he had been doing in the Cholera ward. On being told what he was doing, Rogers resented the idea of anyone interfering with the patients. Bidhan was not quite sure of his position and so he mentioned the matter to Col. Lukis the next day and enquired whether it was wrong of him to have gone to the Cholera ward for making the observations that he was doing. Col. Lukis said nothing but the next day he sent for Col. Rogers and in Bidhan's presence said, "Rogers, the Cholera ward by itself is not assigned to any Physician and according to the rules of the Hospital it belongs to the Principal. Dr. Roy is my House Physician. In my absence he is in charge of the Cholera ward. In future when you enter the Cholera ward, please take the permission of Dr. Roy." This was the way in which Col. Lukis used to treat every attempt on the part of the European members of the Indian Medical Service to coerce the Indian Medical subordinates. Col. Lukis used to tell him, "Bidhan, I may not be teaching much Medicine to you, but I will teach you one thing in life—whenever you meet an

Englishman, never bend your back even by quarter of an inch, because he will make you bend double."

"This was a wise counsel which Col. Lukis gave me," says Bidhan, "and I have never forgotten it in my life."

On another occasion he met Col. Bird, the Senior Physician of the Hospital, on the steps. Bird suddenly turned round to Bidhan and said, "Why don't you raise your hand in salaaming me when you meet me?" Bidhan replied that those who wore European clothes need not raise the hand in salaaming and that it was sufficient if they recognised their superiors and wished them. Col. Bird said, "No, the rule is that you must raise your hand in salaaming the Officers." To that Bidhan replied, "I have not seen the rules, but if I see them, as a disciplined officer I would obey them. But I might inform you that I do not raise my hand in salaaming my own immediate boss, Col. Lukis." Bird got annoyed at this reply and left him with a threat that he would report the matter to the Principal. A few minutes after, as Bidhan came down the steps, he could see from a distance that Bird was talking to Lukis. He could also see that while Col. Lukis was listening, his eyes seemed to indicate that he was very amused. When Bidhan went to Lukis, he asked him what he had to say and the story was re-told. Bidhan further told Lukis that whenever he wished Col. Bird, he would turn his head away and would not respond and in spite of this, he had asked him to raise his hand in salaaming. Col. Lukis calmly said, "Bidhan, don't wish him in future. Don't go near him. Such members of the Service bring the reputation of the whole Service to the mud."

Bidhan obeyed his instructions. Until he left Calcutta for England, he avoided meeting Bird in the wards of the Hospital.

"But, I must confess," admits Bidhan, "when I decided to go to England, Col. Bird came up to me, wished me luck and gave me letters of introduction to different friends in England." It is obvious that Col. Bird had learnt his lesson.

## CHAPTER IX

### EARLY PRACTICE

On the completion of his medical studies in England, Bidhan was faced with the same financial troubles as he had before leaving India. So hard up he was in England that he had not even the money to buy for himself the frock coat and top hat in which medical students were to present themselves on the occasion of receiving degrees. Bidhan had to hire them on payment of a small fee. A friend from India gave him just enough money on loan to cover his passage which cost him £17 up to Colombo and £4 from Colombo to Calcutta. When he reached Madras he had only Rs. 15/- with him and out of it he gave Rs. 10/- to a needy friend whom he met on the way. So with Rs. 5/- in his pocket—which was all his earthly possession at that time—he reached Calcutta in July 1911 and rented a house at 84, Harrison Road.

On return from his leave, he was assigned, by Col. Calvert, the then Principal of the Medical College, the duty of teaching Policemen "First-Aid"—a job which apparently he disliked, but he did it in the spirit of discipline and duty. Bidhan was very much encouraged on his arrival at Calcutta by the warm welcome accorded to him by his patients and students. He wanted to start his private practice, for which, however, money was needed. He borrowed it from some of his friends and set up his ~~practice~~ in a humble way. Having obtained the double degrees of M.R.C.P. and F.R.C.S., young Dr. Bidhan felt that he should raise his medical fees from Rs. 2 to Rs. 8. In no time he got on very well in practice and within a few months he was able to pay back the money he had borrowed.

A few months after his return, a wealthy gentleman of the city offered him the position of a family doctor in his

house. In those days it was very common for rich people to engage family doctors whose remuneration was none too high. Young Dr. Bidhan, though still beset with pecuniary difficulties, did not relish the idea of tying himself as a family doctor to any one. As a matter of fact, during his journey back from England to India Bidhan spent considerable time in thinking of the future course of his practice. Mentally he had resolved that he would neither accept a family doctor's position, nor would he be ever attached to any pharmacist's dispensary, thereby earning money by taking commission out of prescriptions given to patients. Naturally he refused the wealthy gentleman's offer of the job of a family doctor. At it, the man became furious and even sarcastic, wondering whether this young doctor had a swollen head just for having a few letters affixed after his name. He even warned Bidhan that it would take years before he could rise to the eminence of Col. R. L. Dutt or Sir Nilratan Sarkar in the medical profession. In his characteristic way young Dr. Bidhan mildly and politely told the wealthy gentleman that he was prepared to struggle hard in life and to wait patiently for success. Then, just as a matter of curiosity, Bidhan wanted to know the remuneration he was prepared to give to his family doctor. Promptly came the reply that it would be Rs. 150/- a year. Bidhan smiled and told him that it would be better not to have such a family doctor, because a doctor who would serve on Rs. 12/- a month would be worse than useless. The wealthy gentleman flared up and wanted Bidhan to remember that men, more experienced than, and ~~self~~ to, him had been working on this remuneration and that, after all, Rs. 150/- meant thousands of annas and even more pices. Quite humorously Bidhan retorted that it was quite possible one day he would have a chance of being paid by the same gentleman Rs. 150/- for a single case. They parted and the wealthy fellow went away disgruntled.

A few months later, a call came to Dr. Bidhan one day at about 5 P.M., requesting him to attend immediately on



Dr. B. G. ROY  
(1937)



## EARLY PRACTICE

a girl who had taken opium. He went at once with all the paraphernalia to give the girl a stomach wash. Immediately she felt better. Bidhan saw her again at 9 P.M. and also the next morning at 9 A.M. He declared the girl to be out of danger and the father was immensely pleased with the attendance of the doctor, and asked him about his fees. Bidhan told him that normally he would not ask for his fees but in this particular case his fee would be Rs. 150/-. A cheque for the amount was promptly written and handed over to the doctor, the gentleman expressing over and over again his immense satisfaction at the recovery of his daughter. Bidhan felt amused at the humour in the situation as the father of the girl happened to be the same wealthy gentleman who had approached him with the offer of the position of a family doctor. He reminded the gentleman of the talk they had some months ago when refusing his offer Bidhan had told him that some day he might get Rs. 150/- for a single case, instead of doctoring the family for a whole year on that amount. The man felt subdued and there and then accepted Bidhan's suggestion to raise the allowance of his family doctor from Rs. 150/- to Rs. 600/- a year.

Incidentally, it must be said that this was the first and only occasion when Dr. Bidhan told a patient's family about his fees. That was done more to convince the gentleman of the dignity of the profession than to earn the money. In the fifty years of his practice Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy had never sent a bill or ever asked for the fees for professional attendance. On many occasions he had even refused to accept fees from poor patients. Once it so happened that he was called to see a patient who was being attended on by an I.M.S. doctor 'X'. When Dr. Bidhan finished his examination of the patient, 'X' came in for a second time to the house and when about to leave he asked for his fees. The patient's family had not then the money to pay both the doctors. The situation was embarrassing. Bidhan of his own accord told the family that he need not be paid but the money intended for him might be given to the other doctor.

### DR. B. C. ROY

Bidhan's success in medical practice was almost meteoric. Within the first few years of his return from England he developed a vast practice and his name and fame spread in the city not only among patients, but also among his students and colleagues.

An instance of his early popularity may be recalled. Once Bidhan was requested to see a female patient whose husband gave the interesting story of how he had selected the doctor. He told Bidhan that the doctor in whom his family had complete faith had died suddenly. He wanted to select a substitute. He asked a few young doctors, each one of whom, he revealed, gave the name of a consultant of his choice. He was shrewd enough to realise that such selection might arise out of some self-interest or might be based on personal likes and dislikes. He then hit upon a novel plan. He thought that medical students would be free from personal prejudices of those in profession and so he sent two of his own men to the gate of the Medical College with pencil and paper in hand. They were directed to meet the students as they came out of the College at 10 A.M. and to ask them the name of the doctor in whom they had confidence. His men collected some 200 and odd such votes. He told Bidhan that he had obtained 85% of the votes in his favour, and was rather surprised to hear that a young man of 29 had obtained such high degrees from England. Sceptic as he was, he sent for the University Calendar to satisfy himself whether the young doctor's degrees were genuine or bogus. It was after all these that he sent for Dr. Bidhan Roy.

His house was on the bank of the Hooghly and his wife was ailing for nearly nine months. Then, pointing to the boats sailing on the river, some of which had patched sails while others possessed new ones, the husband told Dr. Bidhan significantly that he wanted him to treat his wife so that she could be like one of the boats with the patched sails. He did not like that a sail should be absolutely new, because, he said, if a squall or a storm came, the boat with a new sail might flounder while the one with the leaky and patchy

## EARLY PRACTICE

sail would allow some breeze to pass through and save it from disaster.

Even at the comparatively young age of twenty-nine, Bidhan established a reputation as a clever and competent physician. What most people appreciated in young Dr. Bidhan was not merely his analytical skill, his intuitive understanding of the causes of particular ailments and effective prescription of remedies, but his most sympathetic approach to his patients. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy always gave a healing touch to his patients, for, apart from prescribing remedies for the disease, he used to nurse the patients who needed special attention. There were occasions when attending on poor patients he even used to cook the special food needed for them.

In fact, many stories are current as to how the very presence of Dr. Roy had brightened up suffering men and women to whom he gave hope and comfort. So conscientious was he in his professional work from his early days that he would not leave anything half-done. Even if his patients could not pay for a second or third visit, he would invariably go and enquire after them.

As a young doctor with a wide practice, Bidhan realised the difficulties in those days of having tests of blood, urine, etc., as there were not many laboratories. Thereupon he conceived the idea of having a laboratory in his own house and with the help of a few other friends in the profession he started one. It enabled him to have the required tests as and when he wanted them, without having to waste valuable time endangering the lives of his patients.

The key-note of Dr. Bidhan Roy's early success in medical practice was his enthusiasm to bring succour to his patients. An old patient of his told me that young Dr. Bidhan invariably came to a sick-bed with an optimistic smile which produced hope in the ailing person. Bidhan's own philosophy of his profession had always been "Do your best and leave to God the rest". Sympathy for fellow-beings was a creed with Bidhan, which he had inherited from his

## DR. B. C. ROY

parents and which he had practised from tender years. On one occasion appreciating this great trait in Bidhan, a patient confessed to him that he had no faith in allopathy, homoeopathy or any other "pathy", but only in sympathy.

It was almost a religious practice with young Dr. Bidhan to begin each day of his professional life by making a note of the total number of patients who desired his attendance, irrespective of whether they were paying him or not. It was done out of a feeling within himself that he was obliged to discharge his duty to these patients by attending on them, since they had asked for his help. "Once you take up this attitude of mind in a profession," said Dr. Roy to me one day, "nothing can go wrong with it. After all, the medical profession is not a business concern. The knowledge, the skill, the sympathy and the devotion which a doctor gives to his patients can never be measured in terms of money. A doctor should always feel that he has a sacred duty towards suffering humanity and he should have unbounded kindness for everyone."

From his early days Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy enjoyed the confidence of his patients with the result that they handed over to him their body and soul. That developed a spiritual understanding between the doctor and his patient. It is being increasingly realised that the mind of a cultured individual controls the body and the bodily functions. And the more the mind is developed, the greater is such control. This Dr. Roy realised from the days of his early practice and it was supremely manifested to him by the greatest of all his patients, Mahatma Gandhi, whose relations with Bidhan will be discussed in a later chapter.

The two dominating personalities in the medical profession in the early days of Bidhan's practice were Dr. Sarbadhikary and Sir Nilratan Sarkar. These two eminent men were quick to discern that young Dr. Bidhan Roy was destined to lead the medical profession in Calcutta and in India. Naturally they extended their patronage to Bidhan who in all humility accepted their leadership. Sir Nilratan Sarkar very often

## EARLY PRACTICE

used to take young Dr. Bidhan with him to attend on serious cases. Obviously Sir Nilratan, the master of the profession in those days, had the greatest confidence in the abilities and powers of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. And here it must be said that many a young man with such high reputation and drawing respect and consideration of the outstanding leaders in the profession would fall a victim to pride, the sin of angels, even unconsciously. But Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy from his struggling days in medical practice to the present day when his supreme eminence in the profession is universally recognised, has remained a humble man, willing to listen patiently and sympathetically to his patients and their doctors.

## CHAPTER X

### FROM CAMPBELL TO CARMICHAEL

Ever since the British consolidated their rule in India, they organised the various Administrative Services under the overlordship of Englishmen. Thus they had the I.C.S. for Civil Administration, the I.P.S. for Police control and the I.M.S. for the medical profession. The higher posts in all these were held by Englishmen. This was true even of the medical profession where they gave little or no opportunity to those in the Provincial Services to rise up. Apart from the cities, in almost all the provinces the high District Officials, particularly the Collector (who was also the District Magistrate), the Police Superintendent, the District Judge and the Civil Surgeon, were all Britishers. Englishmen in the medical profession with lesser qualifications than Indians were given superior posts. Eminent Indian physicians and surgeons had to remain outside the I.M.S., though Indians were free to join the Service. This was the prevailing condition when Bidhan returned to India with two of the highest degrees in the medical world.

Immediately on his arrival at Calcutta, Bidhan went and saw the Surgeon-General who was then the head of the Medical Services in the province. He happened to be also Bidhan's old Professor. After congratulating his pupil for having obtained the double degrees of M.R.C.P. and F.R.C.S., he enquired what Bidhan intended to do. Young Dr. Bidhan expressed his desire to remain in Calcutta and pick up a practice. The Surgeon-General bluntly told him that he had nothing to offer him in Calcutta. Bidhan then pointed out to him that his colleagues in the Indian Medical Service who had appeared along with him in the M.R.C.P. and had obtained lower positions in the examination than he were all promoted to Professorship of the Medical College, and

## FROM CAMPBELL TO CARMICHAEL

said that he failed to see why he should not be given equal recognition for the qualifications he had obtained. The Surgeon-General replied that it was possible for a member of the Indian Medical Service, but a member of the Provincial Medical Service could have only a limited field of activity.

Finally he told Bidhan that the only place where he could fit in was the Campbell Medical School as a teacher in one of the subjects. While his colleagues in the Indian Medical Service became Professors of the Medical College, all that Bidhan could secure was a teacher's post in a School. Even that could not be had, as there was to be no vacancy for some months to come. However, he offered him the post of a Civil Surgeon in one of the district towns, which Bidhan refused to accept. He told the Surgeon-General that if position and status were his important objectives, he could have joined the Indian Medical Service, but his intention was that he would remain in the Provincial Service and yet pick up a practice in Calcutta. The Surgeon-General replied that it was not possible for him "to provide for a white elephant like you in Calcutta". Boldly Bidhan asked the Surgeon-General to put it in writing that he could not provide for him a post in Calcutta, so that he might resign from the Service. The Surgeon-General, who was embarrassed, confessed that he would then be criticised by the Indian press saying that a former Professor of Dr. B. C. Roy had forced him to resign from the Service because he could not provide a post for him in Calcutta. There the conversation ended.

For some months Bidhan remained in what may be called a super-numerary job attached to the Medical College, doing practically nothing. He felt his time hanging on his hands, as he did not pick up sufficient practice to fill the day. Therefore, he started a small tutorial class in surgery. It may be revealed that most of the students who joined his tutorial classes had ultimately become important members of the medical profession in this country.

One of the first duties assigned to Dr. Bidhan by the

Government was to teach the constables of Calcutta First Aid and ambulance work. He felt it was not the sort of work for a doctor holding the highest degrees in Medicine and Surgery available in the British Empire when it could be performed even by an ordinary Licentiate in Medicine. With his inborn sense of discipline and loyalty to the profession, Dr. Bidhan decided to take it up. He felt that if he had refused it, he would be told that members of the Medical Service, when they went to England, came back with swollen heads and refused to work contentedly in any place assigned to them by the Head of the Department. So he worked for over nine months, training Policemen until there was a vacancy in the Campbell Medical School, the teacher of Anatomy there having retired.

Dr. Bidhan was appointed a teacher of the Campbell Medical School. It did not give him any opportunity for clinical work. Although he was then getting on well in practice, yet he wanted to be associated with a hospital, as it would give him more experience and better facilities for his professional work. But that was not to be.

A few months after Bidhan had joined his post, the then Superintendent of the institution, Col. Anderson, appointed a Demonstrator as Assistant to Dr. Roy without consulting him. Bidhan took objection to this and eventually Anderson had to give in apologising.

Later, Major Rait, a member of the Indian Medical Service, became the Superintendent of the Campbell Medical School and on the very day of his appointment he asked Dr. Bidhan to see him in his house to discuss matters relating to his department. As soon as they sat down to discussion, almost the first question Rait asked was, "What work are you doing here?" On being told that besides delivering a course of didactic lectures, he had to supervise the dissection of the students and the work of the Demonstrators, the Superintendent said, "I am afraid, you are being paid too much for the work." Dr. Bidhan was then getting a little over Rs. 330/- a month. He promptly replied that he failed





DR. B. C. ROY.  
(1938)

## FROM CAMPBELL TO CARMICHAEL

to understand why a person who had obtained the M.R.C.P. (Lond), F.R.C.S. (Eng.) and M.D. (Cal.) should get only Rs. 330/- a month, while another who had even failed in the Edinburgh Fellowship should get Rs. 1,500/- a month. (Major Rait who had failed in the Edinburgh Fellowship was at that time drawing a salary of Rs. 1,500/- p.m.).

Continuing Bidhan said, "I do not see why such differentiation is made in the profession. Perhaps the only reason is difference in the colour of the skin."

Major Rait never expected such a retort from the young doctor and was naturally annoyed. So he bade goodbye telling Bidhan that he would send an official note afterwards. The note came in due course indicating the hours Bidhan was supposed to be present in the Anatomy Department. Every day he was to be there from 12 A.M. to 3 P.M. This direction was in pursuance of a fifty-year old Notification of the Department.

After receiving the note, Bidhan went to Major Rait and enquired of him whether it was intended that he should follow the letter of the direction, or the spirit of it. "Of course, the letter of the law has to be followed," announced Rait. "But," pointed out Bidhan, "when we engage a third class *thicca gharry*, we pay by the hour, but if we engage a taxi we pay by the distance it covers. Likewise, when we appoint a peon or a servant, we ask him to work for a certain number of hours in the day, but when we appoint a man in charge of a department, we look to the efficiency of the person and not the number of hours that he works every day." Rait again repeated that he wanted the letter of the law to be followed.

A few days after this, Rait wrote to Bidhan asking him whether he would be able to take tutorial classes for the senior Surgical students between the hours of 4 and 5 in the evening. Bidhan threw the letter into his waste-paper basket and did not reply.

Some days later, Superintendent Rait came to the Anatomy Department, perhaps with a veiled intention of finding out

whether Bidhan was present there at 2 o'clock. When he met Bidhan he suddenly asked him why he had not sent a reply to his letter about the tutorial classes. "The letter," said Bidhan calmly, "has gone to the place it deserved to go to, viz., to the waste-paper basket." The Superintendent was perplexed and asked, "Why?" Bidhan told him that according to his statement, it was the letter of the Notification that he had to follow and not the spirit. "I was asked to attend the department from 12 A.M. to 3 P.M.," Bidhan explained, "and that finished all my responsibility to the institution. 4 P.M. to 5 P.M. was my hour, and I refused to accept your suggestion." Rait remarked that it was a form of disobedience of order. "If that be so, I am prepared to argue the case before the highest authorities," answered Bidhan. They parted.

Many were the incidents in the Campbell Medical School which showed the spirit of independence, and personal and national self-respect that was developing in young Dr. Bidhan. While he would do his duty conscientiously, he would not accept injustice from whichever quarter it came and also resisted unwarranted and unreasonable domination.

On one occasion when the last Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser, was visiting the Campbell Medical School, Dr. Bidhan arrived at the premises in his car five minutes earlier. There he met his colleagues and friends who were waiting to receive the Lieutenant Governor. He did not notice Major Rait standing there and so went on talking to his friends.

Later Rait sent for Dr. Bidhan and asked him why he did not recognise him and did not raise his hat. Bidhan told him that, as a matter of fact, he did not notice him and he did not raise the hat because in England they did not do it when they saw the Superintendent or Professor. He added, "I thought, Englishmen, wherever they went, did carry with them their custom." Retorted Rait, "That is England, but this is India." In that case, Dr. Roy suggested, he could put up a notice that everyone should raise his hat.

## FROM CAMPBELL TO CARMICHAEL

Rait, however, refused to do it, as he said that it would create a sensation. From that day the practice of raising hats ended.

Again it was another Campbell custom for students to shut the umbrella when they saw a Professor. Bidhan did not like the idea of students frequently opening and closing their umbrellas and thus spoiling them. So he told them that it was sufficient for them to show respect to their Professors by wishing them 'good morning' or *namaste-ing* them, and they need not shut their umbrellas. And it happened one day that Major Rait, as he was going along the tank, found that the students were not shutting their umbrellas when he met them. He asked them for an explanation and they told him that Dr. Roy, had directed them not to continue this practice, but only to wish the Professors and Superintendent.

Immediately Rait sent for Dr. Roy and told him that he was preaching rebellion among students. Bidhan explained that it was not preaching disobedience but he was only guiding them to a more sensible and reasonable practice.

Bidhan always had respect for authority but would not submit to indignities that affected personal and national self-respect.

Towards the end of his term in the Campbell Medical School, Major Rait sent for Dr. Roy and asked him a frank question:—

"Dr. Roy, do you not think that I am a fool?"

Bidhan replied: "It is difficult for me to give an answer to this question. If I said, 'Yes', you would not like the answer; and if I said, 'No', I would hurt my conscience. I don't know what answer to give you."

At the conclusion of this conversation, Major Rait said that he had decided to leave the institution much earlier than he intended to, because he felt that he did not possess the requisite qualifications to be the Superintendent of a School where there were teachers who were much more qualified than he.

### DR. B. C. ROY

Bidhan remained in the Campbell Medical School till 1919 and then suddenly resigned his post to join the Carmichael Medical College, the present R. G. Kar Medical College. It was an instantaneous decision and was taken in the greater interest of the nation.

One day while driving in his car to College Street through Bow Bazar, Dr. Roy was stopped on the way by Dr. Mrigendra Lal Mitra who came from the opposite direction. He told Dr. Roy that the question of the affiliation of the Carmichael Medical College was to be decided within a few hours and the Syndicate had refused to accept their selection of a Professor of Medicine but would be willing to sanction the affiliation if Dr. B. C. Roy became the Professor of Medicine. Without a second's thought Dr. Roy agreed, turned his car back to the Campbell Medical School and submitted his resignation to the Superintendent, Col. Leventon. The Superintendent hesitated to accept it and suggested that Dr. Roy could, instead, take the nine months' leave which was due to him and go to the Carmichael Medical College. "If after nine months, the College did not progress, you could come back here," he added. But Bidhan refused to take leave and insisted on the acceptance of his resignation.

In an hour's time it was made known to the Syndicate that Dr. B. C. Roy had agreed to be the Professor of Medicine and the University sanctioned the affiliation of the Carmichael Medical College. Since then Dr. Roy remained a Professor of the R. G. Kar Medical College. Even today he is a Professor (on leave).

Here it must be mentioned that the Carmichael Medical College sprang out of the patriotic enthusiasm of the nationalist-minded doctors of Bengal. One of the characteristic things of Bengal was that almost all major educational and professional institutions were started by non-official efforts and eminent men in the various professions had always actively participated in these ventures. The Carmichael Medical College was started in a humble building in Bowbazar Street by Dr. R. G. Kar and a few

## FROM CAMPBELL TO CARMICHAEL

others with the excess money collected for welcoming Prince Albert who visited Calcutta. It was originally called 'Albert Victor School of Medicine'. Later, Lord Carmichael, the Governor of Bengal, extended his patronage to the institution which was actively helped by the services of eminent men like Dr. Sarbadhikari, Sir Nilratan Sarkar, Dr. R. L. Dutt, Dr. Mrigendra Lal Mitra, Sir Kedar Nath Das, Dr. M. N. Banerjee, Dr. L. M. Banerjee, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and a host of other leading physicians and surgeons.

It was to serve a National institution that Bidhan left the Campbell Medical School and he has lived to see the Carmichael Medical College grow into a gigantic institution—one of the biggest in India where students from all parts of the sub-continent receive education. Later in life Bidhan also became one of the principal architects in building up the R. G. Kar Medical College and Hospitals. When on the 15th December 1941 the institution celebrated its Silver Jubilee, Dr. B. C. Roy, as the President of the Medical Education Society of Bengal and also as the President of the Jubilee Celebration Committee, had the good fortune to see that the labours of himself and the other eminent doctors had borne fruit.

In between the years of 1911 and 1919, Bidhan suffered two great personal losses. The first, of course, was the death of his beloved father Prakash Chandra Roy who passed away on the 7th December 1911, with the consolation that his children were forging ahead in life and particularly his favourite last child Bidhan, who had by the time returned to India with covetable degrees in medicine and surgery. Later came the death of Bidhan's professor, patron, friend and guide, Col. Lukis in 1918, after he had served a term as the head of the medical profession in India.

Bidhan had the greatest love and admiration for his great father and the sincerest affection for his professor Col. Lukis. To this day, these two personalities though no more in this world exercise a magnetic influence on Dr. Roy.

## CHAPTER XI

### IN THE UNIVERSITY

One of the very first things that Dr. Roy did on taking up the post of Professor of Medicine in the Carmichael Medical College was to put up a notice on the big board as a motto for his students. It read:—

“A heart that never hardens,  
A temper that never tires,  
A touch that never hurts.”

From the outset Bidhan became very popular with the students who were always eager to attend his classes. One of his students, who in later life became an eminent doctor, confessed to me that it was always a pleasure for him and his fellow students to attend Bidhan's classes and the most difficult problems in Medicine were always explained to them in his characteristic lucidity of language with an extraordinary grasp on the subject. Bidhan's memory, he asserted, was prodigious, not only concerning medical science but even in remembering faces once seen by him.

As a practitioner, Dr. Roy's fame spread and senior members of the profession on occasions discussed medical problems with him. His reputation as a physician went even beyond the limits of the city at that early age.

From the early days of his medical practice and of his teaching in the Campbell School and the Carmichael College Dr. Roy was interested in educational matters and became a friend of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee. It was Sir Asutosh who first suggested that Bidhan should become a Fellow of the Calcutta University and thus participate in educational activities. Often the practice at that time was for candidates for Fellowship to get about a hundred names of fresh graduates and to have them registered on payment of the required fees, so as to secure their votes. Dr. Roy resented

## IN THE UNIVERSITY

this practice as it meant purchasing votes. He wanted to stand on his own credentials and offered himself for election. Without spending a single pice, he was elected with a large majority, defeating Charu Chunder Biswas, Manmatha Nath Roy and Dr. Kedar Nath Das.

Since his entry into the University as a member of the Senate in 1916, he spared no pains to study the problems of the institution, particularly its financial side. He played a prominent part in the tussle between the Government and the University for its autonomy. The attitude of the Government towards the University's appeal for financial assistance definitely hardened after the acceptance by the University of Sir Tarak Nath Palit's princely endowment which laid down the condition that Professors to be appointed with the funds made available must be Indians. This was Bidhan's diagnosis which he unequivocally asserted later on the floor of the Bengal Legislative Council.

While, no doubt, medical practice was his chief preoccupation, his versatile mind worked in other directions as well, and particularly in engineering activities. There is an interesting story how he first conceived the idea of starting a hydro-electric venture in Shillong, which later materialised into the Shillong Electric Company. It will be told later.

After becoming a Fellow of the Calcutta University, Dr. Roy was anxious to uphold the prestige of the great institution and its rights and privileges on which he did not want the Government to encroach, and always stood against any attempt by anyone to lower the status of the University. In 1921 in the Bengal Legislative Council Sir P. C. Mitter made a speech criticising vehemently the University for "criminal thoughtlessness". The very next morning Dr. Roy sent in a resolution to say that the Senate regretted that one of its members made a remark about the University which had then no representation in the Council. Sir Asutosh Mookerjee approved the resolution and it was accepted. Thereupon a committee was appointed to go into the matter. The committee threw back the blame on to the Government

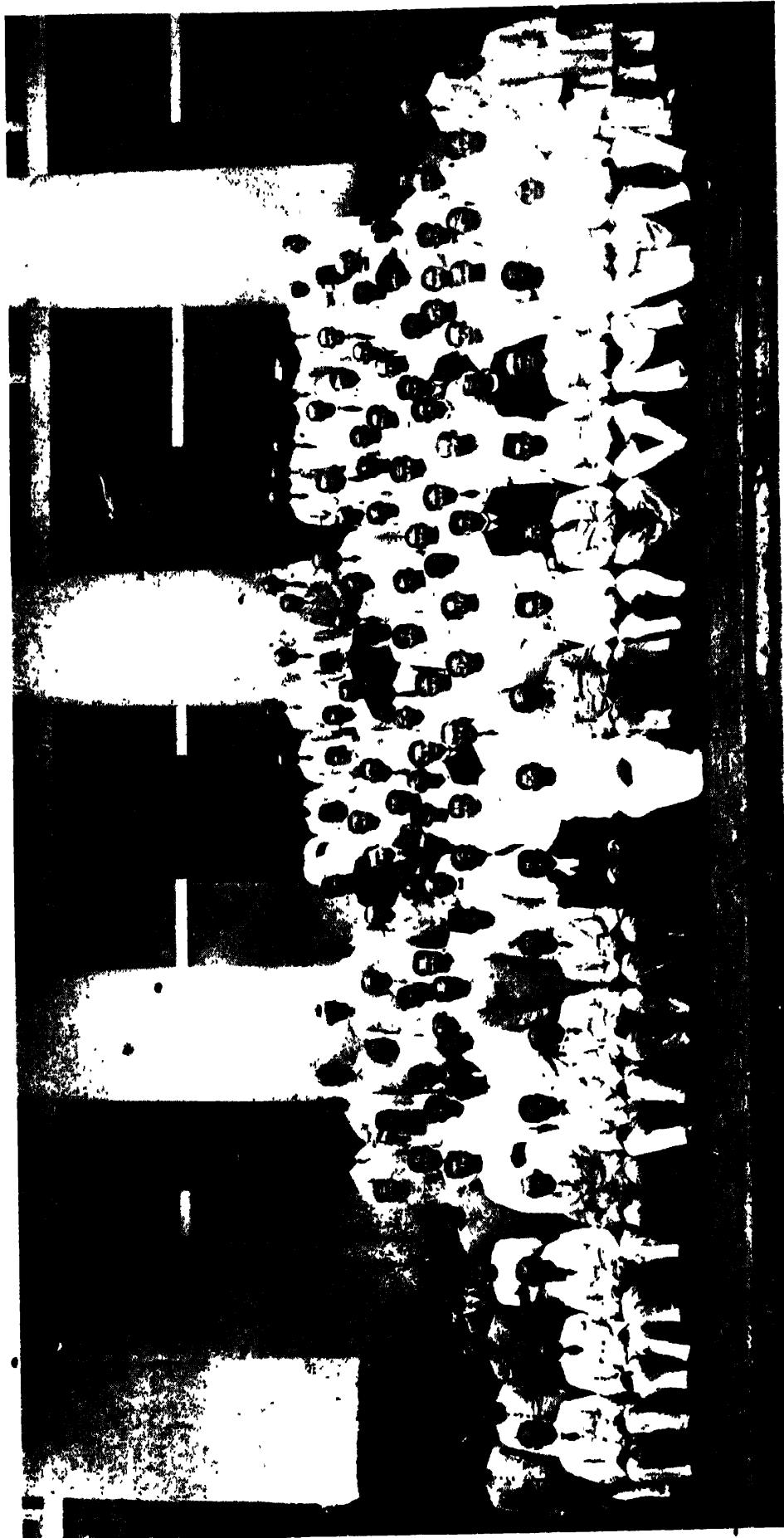
## DR. B. C. ROY

for its step-motherly treatment of the University. Then and there Bidhan felt that such criticisms against the University in the Council should not go unchallenged and wanted to step into politics for the defence of national interests.

In March 1922 Sir Asutosh Mookerjee finished two terms of his Vice-Chancellorship. Then Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal and Chancellor of the University, wrote a letter informing that Sir Asutosh was to be re-appointed Vice-Chancellor, provided certain conditions were fulfilled. The next day Sir Asutosh called for Dr. Roy and showed him the letter of the Governor. Dr. Roy wanted to know the reaction of Sir Asutosh to the letter of the Governor. That produced the famous speech of Sir Asutosh in which he thundered: "Freedom first, Freedom second and Freedom always." The offer was rejected by Sir Asutosh with the scorn it deserved.

It was Sir Asutosh who wanted Dr. Roy to stand for election to the Bengal Council. In fact, Sir Asutosh told Sir Nilratan Sarkar that Dr. Roy had decided to stand as a candidate for the Council. Sir Nilratan gave out his own intention to stand for election from the constituency in which he lived. Thereupon, Dr. Roy said that he would find out another constituency. It was Surendra Nath Roy of Behala who suggested to Dr. Roy that he should stand from the North Calcutta Municipal Constituency and oppose Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee who was then a Minister of the Government. It was a difficult task for a comparatively young man like Dr. Roy to oppose in an election Sir Surendra Nath, the "uncrowned king" of Bengal at that time. But then Sir Surendra Nath had become unpopular by accepting a Minister's position in the Government. Dr. Roy argued within himself that if he was defeated, it would be by a bigger man and if he succeeded, it would be a tremendous victory. Again that indomitable spirit to conquer even the apparently impossible goaded him on to take his supreme decision to contest Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee. Having decided to stand for election, Dr. Roy made a thorough job of it just as he treated his patients. He went





BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL 1926.

M. M. Sen Gupta (centre), Dr. B. C. Roy (sitting second from right), next to M. A. K. Fazlul Huq  
On the extreme left is sitting Sir Jadynath Sankar

## IN THE UNIVERSITY

to each and every voter to announce his candidature. At a small meeting of elders in Paikpara Dr. Roy tried to explain why he wanted to go to the Council. At that time one young fellow jumped up and said, "There is no use talking about all these, but tell us how much money you would give our *Harisava*." The boy added that Sir Surendra Nath had promised to give Rs. 2,000/- At that Dr. Roy humorously replied, "Do you think that your *Harisava* is on auction? I am not prepared to accept it!" This little incident and the reply Dr. Roy gave were discussed by the people and they liked it.

Bidhan divided his constituency into two parts and began his electioneering campaign, meeting individuals and addressing gatherings. Most people appreciated Dr. Roy's approach and his appeals which were very dignified and had not a tinge of personal vanity or ambition. He raised the contest from the personal to the impersonal level, declaring that he respected and revered Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee but was opposing him because of his changed politics in joining hands with the Government. He even declared that he would withdraw from the contest if Sir Surendra Nath resigned from Ministership.

It was a keenly contested election and the supporters of Sir Surendra Nath on many occasions had obstructed Bidhan's meetings. Bidhan refused to join the Congress Party then under the leadership of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das. While Bidhan had the greatest admiration and love for Chittaranjan, he refused to sign the Congress pledge and wanted to remain an Independent. The sympathies of Deshabandhu were with Dr. Roy and at several meetings Chittaranjan spoke in support of Bidhan's candidature. Of the many who actively supported and worked for Dr. Roy, the name of Tulsi Charan Goswami stands out prominently.

Of this election and Bidhan's entry into politics I shall go into greater details in the coming chapter.

## CHAPTER XII

### ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

It is remarkable that Bidhan Chandra Roy's first entry into politics began with a straight fight in the 1923 Election (under the Montford Scheme of Reforms) against Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee, the "father of Indian nationalism", in his own constituency (24-Parganas Municipal, North, Non-Mahomedan), better known as the Barrackpore constituency. A complete stranger to the wider politics of the country, Dr. Roy became in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, one of the foremost figures in the political life of Bengal at the comparatively young age of forty-two. Though he had no political background as such, he had a sound grasp of politics. He understood human nature and was well aware of the conditions of the people, their aspirations, thoughts and sufferings. It was his sympathy for fellow-beings that made him realise that he could, by entering politics, do a lot to better the conditions of the people. He did not belong to any political party—a fact which he proudly proclaimed in his Election Manifesto. He was fond of asserting then, as he had often done since, that he had no ambition in politics as it is commonly understood.

He himself explains his entry into politics in quite unconventional terms. It was all a matter of evolution as peaceful and as natural as that of the child maturing into manhood. As a practising physician he had every day to deal with a number of patients. It may be revealed here that in treating patients Bidhan had always taken a deep interest in the environments and conditions under which they lived. On many occasions he personally cleaned the patients, arranged their beds, cooked their special food and instructed them on sanitation. It is not only the disease that has to be treated, but also the environments and in contact with all classes of

## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

humanity he, as a doctor, was in a better position than others to understand the prevailing poverty and ignorance of the people and the insanitary conditions under which they lived. The realisation came easily to him that it would not be possible for him to discharge in full his responsibility as a physician if he could not effect all-round improvement in the environments in which his patients lived. He then began to take interest in such diverse subjects as Education, Public Health and Industry. "No medical practitioner," Bidhan feels and asserts, "can be of real use to the society in which he lives if along with the curing effects on the disease he prevents, he does not look after the welfare of the people among whom the patient's lot is cast." "It is obvious," he says, "that the medical practitioners are often drawn towards activities which affect the welfare of the community and which are collectively termed 'politics'."

In his Election Manifesto Dr. Roy struck an original note by saying that in India there were only two parties—the party of the few who profited by any and every activity of the Government and constituted the Government itself, and the party of the many who suffered, due to the self-same activities. He ended the note with the assertion, "I do not belong to the party of the Government."

Politics, as Bidhan understood, viz., service to fellow-beings, had been growing up within him, both as a legacy of his parents and as a result of his struggles from boyhood to the professional days. The same determination that enabled him as a youngster to get over his physical weakness was guiding him even in his struggles against racial domination in the profession. Bidhan was not the man to tolerate indignities or injustices from whichever quarters they came.

The Nationalist movement of his student days had made a great impression on him and he was determined to qualify himself so as to take a useful part in the progress and welfare of the country when the occasion arose.

He contested the Barrackpore election as an Independent candidate. "I personally had no ambition to join the

Indian National Congress," he wrote much later to a friend, "because I was not quite sure that resistance to the Britishers for the purpose of getting the necessary power could be developed only under the aegis of the Congress." He did not join the Swarajya Party either. Indeed, he took the decision to seek election and contest Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee long before the Special Congress Session held in Delhi authorised Congressmen to participate in the elections. It is no reflection on the Swarajya Party and its great leader, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, to point out that Bidhan did not seek adoption by the Party even after Delhi authorisation but was nevertheless supported by the Party.

Though disowning politics or, rather, party politics, Bidhan in his Election Manifesto displayed his remarkable grasp of basic political issues. He affirmed, as already pointed out, that he did not belong to "the Party of the Government". As if deliberately to make it clear that he did not belong to the Swarajya Party either he also emphasised his intention to "work the present Reforms for all that these may be worth." But he affirmed his loyalty to the ideal of Swaraj and explained that by Swáraj he understood a "Democratit State Constitution of the advanced modern type built upon universal adult suffrage" and pledged himself to "use every opportunity that may offer itself, first, to extend the franchise until the entire adult population of the country are placed on the electoral rolls and, second, to secure the full control of the Executive by the Legislature." He also made clear his views on the problems of capital-labour and zemindar-tenant relationship. Though he firmly declared his resolve to set his face "sternly against the fomenting of class war or the organisation of industrial strikes for the pursuit of political ends" and to promote "healthy co-operation between capital and labour", he also expressed his concern at the uncompromising opposition to "the forces and resources of the State" being "more readily placed at the service of Capital than for due protection of the vital interests of labour." He similarly pledged himself to

## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

improve the lot of the tenants and to work for their protection against the tyranny of the zemindars and the officials alike.

But it is the University which figured more prominently in his Election Manifesto, for it is the cause of the University which had given him the inspiration to seek election to the Legislature. Affirming his deep interest in "higher education" and "vocational education", he solemnly pledged himself "to strive to preserve the position of the University and oppose any attempt to destroy the legitimate autonomy or in any way to reduce its status or utility as an institution for higher research."

No General Election held before or since, evoked as much popular interest in Bengal as did the General Election in 1923 which the Swarajya Party contested under the inspiring leadership of Deshabandhu Das and no contest in that election evinced keener interest and wilder enthusiasm than did the contest in the Barrackpore constituency. Bidhan fought Sir Surendra Nath as an Independent candidate. He even declared in his Election Manifesto that he had "conscientious objection" to identify himself with any existing political party. But Deshabandhu Das threw himself heart and soul into the contest on the side of Bidhan. So did every young man living in and around Calcutta. For weeks, millions of pairs of eyes from all over India remained riveted as it were on Barrackpore and when the result was announced on November 30, 1923, it was the biggest news of those days.

Of the 11,660 voters in the list, as many as 8,029 exercised their franchise. Bidhan Chandra Roy obtained 5,688 votes as against only 2,283 votes polled by Sir Surendra Nath.

Years later, on the floor of the Bengal Legislative Council, Dr. Roy was accused, quite unchivalrously by Sir Provas Chandra Mitter of "ungratefulness" on the part of Bidhan in "hounding out of public life" Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee.

Sir Provas forgot, as possibly many others like him did, that in his Election Manifesto Bidhan had clearly declared

### DR. B. C. ROY

that in opposing Sir Surendra Nath he liked his countrymen not to forget the debt they owed to the distinguished leader. Sir Surendra Nath lost the election because, as Bidhan said in the same Manifesto, "by accepting office he has identified himself with the Bureaucracy."

And it was not a chance victory which Bidhan won. He won the constituency and held it for successive terms until he had to withdraw from the Legislature under a mandate from the Congress.

Once Bidhan was in the Council, the Law of Karma combined, as it were, with his own political conviction—that he did not belong to the party of the Government—to throw him into the open arms of the Swarajya Party. He did not formally join the Swarajya Party and does not remember that he ever did. But from the very first day he sat and voted with the Swarajya Party. His close association with Deshabandhu Das during the election ripened soon into political partnership strengthened by growing respect on the one side and affectionate admiration, also growing, on the other. Like all true leaders, Deshabandhu had an unerring insight to discover merits in his followers and he did not take long to realise that Bidhan had a genius for constructive work which few members of his Party could claim to have even in approximate proportions. One of the immediate consequences of this realisation was that he took Bidhan into confidence in formulating his historic constructive scheme to be placed before the Government by him as the Leader of the Opposition. And Bidhan not only took a hand in it but contributed to it substantially.

In the Legislative Council the vigilance, alertness and regard for details he displayed, the range and the sweep of the interest he took and the devotion to the duty of the Legislator which throughout characterised his performances were indeed remarkable. His approach was mainly constructive and it at first seemed that he had little interest in the momentous political issues which had been agitating the minds of the people and had influenced the decision of

## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

the Swarajists to capture the Council. His constituency seemed to have remained ever present in his mind and he lost no opportunity to ventilate and seek redress of the local grievances of the electorate in his constituency. Even a matter like the threatened demolition by the Royal Calcutta Turf Club, to which had been sold some lands in Barrackpore, of a temple situated on that land received his serious attention. He displayed, however, the greatest interest in problems, educational and medical. He stoutly championed the cause of the Calcutta University when in 1925 he moved a Resolution recommending that provision be made in the Supplementary Budget as well as in the Budgets of the succeeding years for an annual grant of Rs. 3,00,000/- to meet the recurring deficits of the University. He made a brilliant speech on the occasion in which he gave a masterly exposition of the financial condition of the University, proved with a wealth of historical details that the Government had been guilty of breaking promises and wriggling out of pledges solemnly given to the University, and passionately pleaded for the autonomy of this great seat of learning,—a plea he repeated on many other occasions, and reinforced with more details about persistent bureaucratic move to officialise the Senate and to drive wedges between community and community and academicians and academicians. He also actively participated in the discussion of the Dacca University Bill which was introduced in 1925 and an amending Bill which was considered in 1928. The Dacca University itself had been conceived in the spirit of communalism, which was rampant in those days. But with befitting dignity Bidhan steered clear of the Scylla of parochialism and the Charybdis of communalism in his criticism of the measure proposed. Proclaiming that he for one stood for the establishment of one University in each Division, he deplored "the communal appeal" of Sir Abdur Rahim, pleaded for the abandonment of the evident official design to set up the Dacca University as a rival to the Calcutta University, emphasised the need for an integrated approach to the problems of higher edu-

tion and stoutly opposed the provisions in the amending Bill calculated to subordinate the Academic Council to the Executive Council. He based his opposition on the principle he championed in the context of the Calcutta University.

Bidhan made equally valuable contributions to the consideration of problems relating to public health and medical relief. He consistently pleaded for decentralisation of the administration of these subjects which was the corner-stone of the development scheme submitted by Deshabandhu Das. He protested on every relevant occasion against differentiation by the Government against Government Medical Schools and private Medical Schools. He pleaded in the context of the Demand for Grant for the Hospital Nurses Institution, for the Government directly undertaking the training of Nurses and for giving all reasonable encouragement to Indian ladies to enter the profession of Nursing. Again and again he focussed public attention on, and recorded his protest against, preferential treatment given to the members of the I.M.S. He stoutly opposed the official Bill to provide for a new constitution of the Bengal Council of Medical Registration with preponderance of official representation and eloquently supported on another occasion Dr. K. S. Roy's Resolution recommending a new constitution for the Governing Body of the State Medical Faculty of Bengal with a view to changing the official character of that body. He exposed with scathing sarcasm the insolence of the Home Member for the time being, Mr. Moberley, who had suggested that the inclusion of outsiders in the body would lead to lowering of the standard of medical education and urged that either the constitution of the Faculty should be changed or it should be robbed of the power of inspecting Medical Schools and kept as a purely examining body. As early as 1925 he moved a Resolution recommending the appointment of a Committee "for ascertaining the causes of pollution of the river Hooghly and to recommend measures, legislative or otherwise, to prevent pollution in future" and supported it with a speech which revealed the painstaking research he



Dr. Roy (standing second from right)  
Front row (left to right) Pandit Motilal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and  
Maulana Abul Kalam Azad



In Indo-Pakistan Meeting. Dr. Roy is seated between Dr. Shyama Proshad Mookerjee and  
Sachin Dev Burman, Commissioner for Pakistan at the time.



## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

~~had~~ made to master the intricacies of a highly technical subject. It was in connection with this Resolution that he predicted that "in the near future Calcutta is going to be developed more towards the north than towards the south," —a prediction which we all know has come true.

Bidhan took the keenest interest in the budgets which were successively presented during his membership of the Council. His analysis of the figures used to be masterly. No allotment, big or small, seemed to have ever escaped his eagle eye and the Finance Member used to have an uncomfortable time every day during the Budget discussion when he would be called upon by Bidhan to explain some apparent discrepancy and, mostly, the disappearance or reduction of some amount of anticipated surplus. Those were the specious days of surplus budget and Bidhan seems to have taken rather seriously an assurance given by the Finance Member in 1924 that the surplus of revenue over expenditure would be constituted into a Special Fund to be devoted exclusively to nation-building activities. So seriously had he taken the assurance that he actually opposed in March 1924 a European non-official member's Resolution recommending that cinema etc. be exempted from the operation of the Bengal Amusement Tax Act, because such exemption might affect the size of the balance. On another occasion he strongly objected to the Budget proposal for the construction of a residential building for the Police Force not because the money was to be spent for the "unpopular" Police but because he felt that it was unsound policy to utilise revenue, income for construction of such buildings. He strongly pleaded for the financing of such projects with a loan "rather than from the unspent balance which should be spent for transferred subjects." Such details never escaped his attention and he strongly resented the cast iron mould of the Budget which the Council could only approve but not change in any way. "If we had," he said in course of one of his earlier Budget speeches, "even the power of transferring a particular amount under a particular head to another head I personally would

have been satisfied with that." In the absence of such power of the elected representatives of the people the presentation and discussion of the Budget, in his opinion, were an "annual ceremony". To the characterisation by the Finance Member of the attitude of the Opposition to the Budget as irresponsible, Bidhan's reply was unconventionally original but highly suggestive and fully convincing. Because the Council had no power even to change the allocation of funds proposed "the only alternative left to us is to raise a loud cry so that not only the Government and the members may hear it but also those in England in whose hands lies our destiny."

But except for this basic approach Bidhan was never destructive in his criticism of the Budget or any proposal involving a rise in the expenditure of revenue. He betrayed no racial animosity in his criticism of the Imperial Services including the I.M.S. nor did he ever pretend to be an egalitarian in his approach to the question of salaries of public servants. It is not the high salary as such which he objected to but the payment of higher salary to particular persons belonging to the particular cadres which he resented. He objected even more strongly to the inflation of a public servant's salary with the addition of allowances in various forms. During Budget discussions he used to carry with him the latest issue of the Civil List and it was his favourite technique to quote extensively from the volume to prove the extravagance of the prevailing administration. Criticising the high salary scale for the I.M.S. he asked on one occasion what justification could there be "for spending Rs. 1,500/- for one of the I.M.S. officers when we can get the same work done by paying much less to local Indian officers"? On another occasion he pointed out the number of allowances which a particular officer was drawing and said, "If you have to pay allowance to a man to do his duty I wonder what he is getting his grade pay for!"

Bidhan took a keen interest in the proposal to construct a new Howrah Bridge and to add a pathway to the Railway Bridge at Bally and he contributed materially to the consi-

## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

devotion of the financial implications of the proposals. When in December 1925 the Government moved a Resolution involving the acceptance of the principle of the Provincial Government making a contribution to the construction of the pathway on the Bally Bridge it was Bidhan who pointed out that the project would benefit most the industrialists and big businessmen on two sides of the Hooghly and on that ground urged that these primary beneficiaries should be made to contribute in higher proportions to the cost of the project. In August 1924 when the Howrah Bridge Bill was sponsored by the Government he supported the motion for circulation because he was anxious to obtain the best available expert opinion. He analysed the financial implications of the measure and was outspoken in his criticism of the high incidence of taxes proposed to be imposed. When the Bill again came up in 1926 for consideration he again stood up in opposition to a proposal to increase the taxpayer's contribution in order to lighten the burden of the Provincial Government. On each of these occasions he was firm in his opposition but constructive in his criticism. He never sought to demolish anything without suggesting what should replace the feature sought to be demolished and how the replacement should be effected.

The details of things received the minute attention of Bidhan but he never lost sight of the wood for the trees. He could effectively criticise the parts because he had a clear perception of the whole. His basic objection to the Budget was that it used to be lacking in policy. But, he had no doubt in his mind what the policy should be. He stood for decentralisation of authority so that local initiative might develop without let or hindrance. Whether he spoke on Public Health Budget, Education Budget or Police Budget, criticising attempts to officialise the Senate or delay in the administration of medical relief or some proposal to provide some new amenity to members of the Force, he pleaded ultimately for more power being given to the people. He stood for the policy of prohibition "not to be achieved to-day, but

the first step ought to be taken from this point of time." as he said in March, 1927. In 1929 he vigorously supported the Bengal Industrial Development Bill introduced by Nalini Ranjan Sarcar because he was firmly wedded to the policy of speedy development of industries with a view to improving the economic condition of the people. His seeming pre-occupation with the details of administration was but the symptoms of his deeper concern for basic principles.

Bidhan therefore did not take long to identify himself also with the politics of the Swarajya Party or, rather, it was his nature which slowly but surely threw him, without even his knowing it, into the vortex of the Swarajist politics. He started with a sincere attempt to mend the administration and having failed in his attempt, decided to end it.

During his first year in the Council though sitting and voting with the Swarajya Party, Bidhan took no active part in purely political discussions. His chief concern in 1924 was the University and he took much interest even in such minor matters as the Railway siding near the Barrackpore Race Course, Calcutta Corporation's Railway line on the Circular Road and the figures in the Budget. But even then his speeches expressed the deep-seated resentment in his mind at the racial discrimination involved in the policies of the Government of the time,—discrimination, the memory of the operation of which against himself during his career in the Provincial Medical Service still remained in his mind. During the discussion of the Budget Demand for European and Anglo-Indian education he gave a penetrating analysis of comparative figures in supporting a cut motion and recorded his strong protest against the proposal of making a "disproportionately higher grant to European Schools" on the ground of "mode of living and cost of education imparted." During the discussion of the Budget Demand under the head 'Police', Bidhan concentrated his attack on the same evil and gave an illuminating illustration from his personal experience of the prevailing racial discrimination. "One day," said he, "I happened to go to the station wear-

## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

ing a *dhoti*. There was a sergeant and an Indian policeman on duty and I was promptly refused entrance. I saw another gentleman coming behind me. He was about ten shades darker than me with a hat on ; he was allowed entrance."

Bidhan made his first political speech in the Council on February 24, 1926, when he supported B. N. Sasmal's motion for the removal of the President, Kumar Shib Sekhareshwar Roy. It was a speech remarkable alike for vigour of presentation and cogency of reasoning. The motion was the sequel to the President having taken disciplinary action against certain members for alleged "disorderly" conduct in the House. Bidhan took his stand on the ground that the Rules under which the President had taken action had been framed by foreigners. But he also quoted extensively from Graham's book *Mother of Parliament* to show that on the relevant occasion the President had acted not only tactlessly but improperly and also unjustly. "Sometimes a deaf ear is as useful to the President of an Assembly as the blind eye was to Nelson," Bidhan reminded the Chair. "I say it is, you who have lowered the dignity of the House," he declared. He charged some "high-placed members of the Government" with having frustrated all attempts to arrive at a settlement in order that the "prestige" of the Chair might be maintained. Bidhan's retort was a masterpiece. "In India when prestige enters by the front door, dignity escapes by the back door," he said. He reached such a height in his peroration that it may be quoted *in extenso*. Said he:

"If this motion is lost," (as it was), "the result will be due to the Government being able to command a subservient and slavish majority. In that case I shall be able to throw open the doors of the House and show to the people the figure of the elected President of the Council as a henchman tied to the Treasury Bench and clothed in a robe of privilege by a benign Government."

Having once broken the ice, Bidhan was completely at ease with politics. By then he had served a long period of

political association with such giants as Deshabandhu Das and Deshapriaya J. M. Sen Gupta and with such astute colleagues as Kiron Sankar Roy and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar. His own soul also had been secretly in tune with the politics of the Swarajya Party. When, therefore, he felt called upon to shoulder the responsibilities for the exposition of the Swarajist principles and the promotion of the Congress ideals he did not falter nor take a single step in the wrong direction. His next political speech was delivered in January 1927 when he opposed a Resolution moved by a Muslim member recommending the appointment of a Muslim Minister, and in that context he gave a sober exposition of the drawbacks and dangers of sectional and communal politics. In August 1927 he went a long step forward and himself moved two motions of No-confidence (as required by the Rules) in the two Ministers, Mr. B. Chakrabarti and Mr. A. K. Ghaznavi. It was a political speech which he made in commanding his motions for acceptance and it was a speech remarkable for dignity and brilliance alike. He criticised principles rather than personalities. Only casually did he mention a few of the lapses of the two sitting Ministers, lapses widely known to the public and often before criticised in the Press. He devoted the greater part of his speech to the exposition of the fundamental drawbacks of the Montford Constitution and the illusory character of the "Reforms". He quoted extensively from the Muddiman Committee's Report, from the evidence recorded by the Committee of the Ministers and ex-Ministers and it was easy for him to prove to the hilt that the Reforms should be ended in the wider interest of the nation.

The Swarajya Party did not command in those days a sure majority in the House. The Muslim members held the balance and many of them were more amenable to personal influences than to the appeal of some principle. But Bidhan had argued his case with such dignity and so convincingly that his motions were carried and the Ministers had to go.

## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

Thereafter Bidhan persisted in his attacks on the Reforms on political grounds and actively, dispassionately and effectively participated, whenever an occasion arose, in political discussions. In March 1928 he supported a motion for the reduction of the Education Minister's salary. In the following August a serious discussion on the constitutional future of India was stimulated by a Resolution by Sir Abdur Rahim. As usual in those days, the Resolution which itself was not unexceptionable from the nationalist point of view, had provoked a number of amendments advocating communal representation in one form or another and in varying proportions. One of these amendments advocating separate communal electorates was moved by Moulvi A. K. Eazlul Huq. Bidhan participating in the debate displayed mature statesmanship. He did not make a frontal attack on communal electorates as such but took his stand on the plea that the Legislature was not the place to discuss the subject of communal electorates. The essence of the plea was that the issue should be settled outside the House where no third party might be present, by the leaders of the communities sitting together round the table.

Bidhan did not take long to become the spokesman in the Council of the Swarajya Party. He became the Deputy Leader after Deshabandhu's death when J. M. Sen Gupta was elected the Leader. Once his indifference towards the political issues was gone, he had often to figure as the spokesman of the Party in political discussions. On him fell early in 1927 the task of moving an adjournment motion to discuss the firing on the Bengal Nagpur Railway employees and strikers at Kharagpur. And again in March 1928 he was commissioned by the Party to speak as its chief spokesman on the cut motion to the Police Budget to censure the excesses committed by the Police in Calcutta in connection with the *hartal* called by the Congress to mark the nation's disapproval of the landing in Bombay of the "all-white" Simon Commission. It was in the course of the second discussion that a European member of the House

indulged in a bit of the usual irony (which subsequent events have proved to have been a prophecy) and attempted to put some moderation into Bidhan by telling him that in ten or fifteen years Bidhan might find himself on the Treasury Benches with the responsibility to defend the Police. The irony was wholly unwarranted for though vigorous on both occasions, on neither occasion did he say anything which he does not say also as the Chief Minister of West Bengal. Speaking on the firing on the strikers at Kharagpur Bidhan recorded his protest primarily against the alleged authorisation of the Auxiliary Force by the District Magistrate to fire on the strikers and the ground on which he protested was that the Auxiliary Force at Kharagpur consisted of the "superior officers of the Railway Company." The principle on which he based his criticism was also clearly stated by him. "Before violence is used," he said, "on entirely unarmed workers who are weak and cannot defend themselves, the onus to show that violence was necessary lies upon the person who used that violence." Speaking on the second occasion on the Police excesses in Calcutta on February 3, 1928 he gave instance after instance from his personal experiences on the day of *hartal* to substantiate the charge that it was the Police and not members of the public who had been aggressive and offensive in their behaviour. "I have not seen a single Indian or Congressman," he said in the course of the account he gave of what he had witnessed, "using force or abusive language towards the Police. On the other hand, every act of cruelty I have seen was done deliberately and more than what was justifiable under the circumstances not by Indian Policemen but by the European Police Serjeants." He asserted that he did not notice the Number plate on some of the Serjeants he saw in the act of beating members of the public and thundered, "I say deliberately that there must have been instructions from headquarters that the Police Number must be taken off on that particular date." He gave instances of arrest of respectable citizens including Sri Ramaprasad

## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

Mookerjee and of forcible entry into private houses by Policemen followed by indiscriminate assault on the members of the family. He also gave instances of the Congress leaders having successfully handled crowds and concluded his speech with the assertion that if peace were the principal objective of the Police and not the prevention of *hartal*, its realisation would have been easy if simply the Police force and other irritating objects like the tramcars running empty, were withdrawn for the day.

Bidhan vigilantly guarded also the interests of Labour. His constituency included a long industrial belt and among those who had returned him to the Council were also a good number of factory workers. The call of these workers on the occasion of the unprecedentedly successful labour strike in jute mills in 1929 could not leave him unmoved. On August 8, 1929 he sought leave to move an adjournment motion to discuss "the recent mill strikes near Calcutta" and on the following day he moved his motion with a brilliant speech essentially based on his Election Manifesto. "I am not a Labour leader, bogus or real," he said interestingly by way of an introduction and claimed that he had a right to represent workers who had sent him "to this House for the third time." "As a member of the Congress Party also" he had to try "for a proper adjustment of the rights of the capitalists and those of the labourers." In the particular case, however, his analysis led him to the conclusion that the workers were more sinned against than sinning and that their demand for higher wages was just. "If," said he at the conclusion of his analysis, "the mill-owners reduced the number of hours of work and left the workers idle it was for their own interest that they did so. When they asked the workers to work for longer hours they did so in their own interest. They did so because they knew that they would be able to sell the increased production. If such be the case the worker should be made a partner in the game not only where such work is concerned but also where profits are concerned." But he criticised the Government more

severely than he did the employers on the charge of having intervened in the domestic dispute between Capital and Labour. He had, prior to giving notice of his motion, toured extensively in the area affected by the strike, had talks with different groups of workers, employers and officers of the Government. He had also seen things with his own eyes. So he asserted on the basis of his firsthand knowledge that "the Government had intervened even before the recent disturbances had taken place." He gave concrete instances and so convincingly did he argue the case that the Government had failed in their duty in handling the jute mill strike that the motion of adjournment involving censure on the Government was carried in the teeth of strong Official opposition.

Bidhan has been habitually shy and even now seldom addresses public meetings. In the Bengal Legislative Council his shyness during the first year or two was pronounced. But having started speaking he progressed by leaps and bounds. He did not, of course, reach even near the standard of oratory set by distinguished orators of Bengal and ably upheld in the Council by the leaders under whom he successively worked. But there is no doubt that within an incredibly short period he became an able debater in the Council. He might have lacked in what is called eloquence but did not either inflict the singsong monotony of manuscript oration on the Council as many of the members in those days did. What he lacked in eloquence was more than made up by his able marshalling of facts and cogency of reasoning. Dignity was the key-note of his speeches and he hated hitting his opponent below the belt. But he could also import into his speeches the usual embellishments of rhetorics. Now and then he could indulge in biting sarcasm. He seemed to command a rich storehouse of repartees and made effective use of the weapons in fending himself or his party against attacks by Sir Provas Chandra Mitter or Mr. Moberly. As a result he was serious in the treatment of the subjects he chose to deal with. But he could also "indulge in a little levity" as he said he did even early

## ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

in 1924 when participating in the discussion on the Budget Demand under the head "Forests", when he made a speech punctuated with jokes about the Maharajadhiraj Bahadur of Burdwan who though was in the opposite camp of politics remained a life-long friend of Dr. Roy. The same wit characterised Bidhan's speech on the Bengal Fish Fry Bill moved by Shah Syed Emdadul Huq in 1926 when his skilful punning on "fried fish" and "fish fry" was highly relished by the members of the House including the mover of the Bill though Bidhan was pleading for virtual shelving of the Bill against the importunities of its author.

In arguing against the official case Bidhan had a knack of turning the table on his opponents. One of the arguments against the Calcutta University which the official spokesman habitually used in those days was that the Muslims did not have adequate representation on the University bodies. In March 1927 during the Budget discussions the then Director of Public Instruction, Mr. Oaten, had repeated the argument. When Bidhan's turn to speak came, the simple but effective retort he gave was: "Why didn't you nominate more Muslims on the Senate?" There was no reply to the retort as there could be none, for the Senate in those days used to be a predominantly nominated body.

The same speech of Bidhan was remarkable also for the display of his adroit handling of figures of speech and his ability to make rapier thrusts at his opponents. He gave a classification of the supporters of the Bureaucracy which was startling in its originality and also devastating in its sarcasm. "There are three groups of members on the opposite benches," he said. And these were: "(1) Latitudinarians, i.e., members of the Government block who enjoy immense latitude and power, play fast and loose with the liberties of the people and manage finances in a way so that their own interests are safeguarded; (2) Attitudinarians, i.e., those amiable people who sit watching the movements of the Government Benches and bend their will at every nod of their masters; their attitude is one of purposeful subjection;

**DR. B. C. ROY**

their fulsome flattery and unabashed sycophancy are a disgrace to the community to which they belong ; they are the veritable Jaichands and Umichands of modern political life ; and (3) Platitudinarians, i.e., those supporters of the Government who say what they do not mean and mean what they never say."

Slowly but surely Bidhan proved himself to be a superb Parliamentarian in the Bengal Council with a fund, at his ready disposal, of wit, irony, pun and sarcasm to enliven his speeches which however used to be more remarkable for the wealth of facts with which those were packed. He rose quite naturally to the position of the Deputy Leader of the Party after the mantle of leadership had fallen on Deshapriya Jatindra Mohan Sen Gupta.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MAYOR

Bidhan was an able Parliamentarian with a pronounced bias for constructive criticism. Besides, as the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in the Council he had given ample demonstration of his capacity for party leadership. The choice of the Congress Party in the Corporation of Calcutta in search of a leader at a crucial period in the history of the Calcutta Corporation, therefore, fell on him quite naturally.

Even otherwise Bidhan was eminently fitted to work in the Corporation to minister to the civic needs of the citizens. He loved Calcutta and knew it more intimately than even the most popular Congress leaders. Enough has been said before to show how deep was Bidhan's love for this city. He could not brook the idea of going anywhere else and considered even an opportunity to improve the prospects of his career to be a misfortune if the opportunity came to him with the corollary of the obligation to leave Calcutta. Indeed, one of the reasons why he did not join the Indian Medical Service was that he did not like to leave Calcutta. Except for the break of a little over two years he had to spend in England for studies, he had lived continuously in Calcutta for over thirty years and had acquainted himself with the people and the problems of the city. In this respect he had one natural advantage which most other city fathers lacked. He had been a Physician and an eminent Physician at that. His professional duties took him to the lanes and bye-lanes of the city and to the tile-roofed hut as often as to the palace. Once he himself declared on the floor of the Bengal Legislative Council that during his professional career he had visited every house in Calcutta. His Physician's eyes and scientific training had helped him to understand the civic problems better than others.

The prevailing political situation also helped, indeed compelled, his entry into the Corporation. Under the mandate of the historic Lahore Congress session, the Congress Party had left the Council in January, 1930. The Civil Disobedience Movement in the form of Salt Satyagraha had been on. Sri Subhas Chandra Bose having been convicted in a sedition case, had been clapped into the prison even before the Dandee March started. Sri J. M. Sen Gupta, then the Mayor of Calcutta, was also imprisoned soon after the movement started. So were other Congress leaders of Bengal. The Congress Party in the Corporation was badly in need of a leader with an outstanding personality. The Congress organisation, then functioning under an official ban, was also in search of a person to lead the Congress Councillors whose loyalty to the Congress principles was undoubted and who yet could be expected to remain out of the prison in order to be able to discharge their duties and responsibilities in the Corporation. Bidhan then was the only Congress leader in Calcutta who fully answered to the requirements of the Congress in the Corporation. And he was selected for the job.

Bidhan was elected an Alderman of the Corporation for 1930-31 and remained an Alderman till 1932-33. He was again elected an Alderman in 1938-39 and remained as such till 1943-44. His first three years in the Corporation, however, were the most important, not only because he was also the Mayor for two successive terms during that period, but also because that was a most significant period in the history of India. He was unanimously elected the Mayor of Calcutta at the first meeting of the Corporation in 1931-32 on the motion of no less a person than Sri Subhas Chandra Bose. He had to face a contest for Mayoralty in 1932-33 when his name was proposed by Sri Santosh Kumar Basu. But he won by a clear majority, having secured 42 votes as against 26 polled by Mr. J. N. Maitra and only 8 secured by Moukhi A. K. Fazlul Huq, later the Chief Minister of undivided Bengal. Except for about six months he had to

## MAYOR

spend in His Majesty's Guest House having been convicted in August 1930 along with other members of the Congress Working Committee, he had an unbroken record of service to the ratepayers during these three years. Whether as an Alderman or as the Mayor, he distinguished himself by dint of his service and acquitted himself creditably as a Party leader, as the Presiding Officer and as an Administrator. Besides attending to his regular duties as Mayor, he took an active interest in the details of the various problems confronting the Corporation and served on several Committees. He was the Chairman of the Finance Standing Committee in 1930-31 and Chairman of the Services Standing Committee in 1931-32. He served as member of the Playground Facilities Special Committee, Mohamedan, Backward and Minority Communities' Appointment Special Committee, Development Special Committee and Sub-Committee on the training of Indian Nurses. During the second period of his Aldermanship he served as Member on the Beggar Problem Special Committee, Harijan Special Committee, Stray Bulls and Cattle Enquiry Special Committee, Unemployment Problem Special Committee and several other Committees dealing with the ordinary administrative problems. The very names of the Committees above-mentioned constitute a sufficient explanation of the wide range of his interests and special knowledge and give a measure of the confidence with which he was looked up to by his fellow-Councillors. And in the discharge of his duties he did not spare himself. "For the first time in the history of the Corporation," said Councillor Sachindra Nath Mukherjee in felicitating him at the conclusion of his first term as Mayor, "they saw that the Mayor was at his office at noon and went on doing his work till 3 P.M." And it is common knowledge that the Mayor has not to work only at his office.

Bidhan did not enter the Corporation "with any forethought" as he said in replying to the felicitations on the eve of his relinquishment of the office of Mayor on March 23, 1933. "I almost drifted to the Corporation," he added, "when

the proposition was put before me as to whether I should go to the Corporation." He had only "a sort of curiosity to find out how the love of one's country, how anyone's love of freedom could be in some way adjusted to the evolution of a constructive ideal." He was "comparatively a new-comer in this House", though with "a brilliant record of public career" to his credit, as Netaji Subhas said in offering him congratulations on his unanimous election as Mayor. But the new-comer had been elected Alderman with a record number of votes,—"a record which was beaten only by Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das," as was pointed out on a later occasion by Sri Santosh Kumar Basu. The "new-comer" also proved himself to be equal to a veteran in the discharge of his duties. Rose petals were ceremoniously showered on him, according to the established practice, when, after election he was conducted to the Mayoral chair. Even more fragrant were the encomiums which were showered in greater profusion when after two years he laid down the reins of Mayoralty. His "tact, patience and courtesy" were universally praised. Members of the Opposition praised him even more than the members of the Congress Party. Sri P. N. Guha said that "there was no occasion when they could take any exception to the Mayor's ruling or his conduct of business." Sri C. C. Biswas acknowledged "with gratitude and appreciation the readiness with which" he had "retrieved his mistakes when he realised that he had made a mistake." Mr. Campbell Forrester praised him for "doing extremely well" and unreservedly admitted that "not a single individual found fault" with him. And the members of the Congress Party, of course, joined the chorus.

It is the ideal of Deshabandhu which had inspired Bidhan to enter the Corporation and during his career in that body he never deviated from the ideal. He had a curiosity to find out "how Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das could have been attracted to work under a Constitution which necessarily had its restrictions." Immediately after his election as Mayor in 1931 he referred to the programme of work for the





Rajaji receiving the Honorary Doctorate from the Chancellor Dr. K. N. Katju.  
Dr. B. C. Roy, Acting Vice-Chancellor stands extreme right



Dr. Roy, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. S. N. Ray, West Bengal Chief Secretary  
(Centre) on the top of the newly constructed 13-story building of the Calcutta Secretariat.

## MAYOR

Corporation which had been outlined by Deshabandhu and firmly added:

"The outlines of the canvas are there, we have got to fill in the details; the broad features of the scheme are there, we have got to frame and work out a programme ; the power, prestige, the men and the money are there, let us utilise them with a set purpose and let us work in unison to bring about the uplift of the poor and the relief of the sufferer, .... Let our service to the ratepayers be guided by a pure heart and an honest effort."

Bidhan accepted Deshabandhu's ideal in its entirety and during his career in the Corporation consistently strove to implement not only its administrative implications but also the political aspect of it. One of his first acts as an Alderman of the Corporation and Leader of the Congress Party was to move on May 14, 1930, a Resolution offering the Corporation's "most respectful homage to Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence" and tendering "to him its sincerest felicitation on his incarceration and on the signal triumph achieved by him in his campaign." From the seat of the Mayor in 1932 he made a spirited protest against certain accusations against the Corporation made in England by Sir Charles Tegart who had been the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta. Sir Charles had said in a speech that "the Corporation provided terrorists and their relatives with jobs largely in the capacity of teachers." He claimed that he had had many instances to prove the accuracy of his statement and that "the Corporation knows it to be the case."

The matter was first raised in the Corporation on November 9, 1932. But since nothing more authentic than a Press report of the speech was available in India, Mayor Bidhan took upon himself the duty of writing to Sir Charles Tegart to ascertain if the speech had been correctly reported in the Indian Press. No reply was received. Meanwhile, the European Association of Calcutta got printed and widely circulated in India a brochure containing the full text of Sir Charles Tegart's speech. Naturally the matter was again

raised at the meeting of the Corporation on December 5, 1932, and the concensus of opinion in the House was that it was the duty of the Corporation to refute the baseless allegations. The task naturally devolved on the Mayor and he fulfilled it with great dignity, clarity and vigour.

"So far as the subject matter of the charge is concerned," thundered Bidhan from the Mayoral chair, "I repeat what I said before that it is an absolutely unwarranted and a deliberate lie and a calumny uttered at a crucial moment in the country's history to mislead the uninformed and to create an unjustifiable prejudice against the Corporation."

"It is one thing," he added, "to use the expression 'those who had suffered in the country's cause'. It is another thing to pass on almost immediately to the sequel: 'the result has been that for years this civic body has provided terrorists and their relatives with jobs largely in the capacity of teachers'. It is a very queer jump from 'suffering in the country's cause' to 'terrorists',—an attempt at the conversion of one group or category of persons into another.... Why is Sir Charles Tegart so anxious to confuse issues? What was the urgency for the great Knight to make such a speech? Why, again, has the European Association taken this trouble of printing and distributing copies of this speech? .... I say that it is a part of a political propaganda against this great Corporation .... Assuming for argument's sake that a person employed here had at one time been connected with terrorism, does that bar that individual from being appointed, if he is otherwise qualified and if he has ceased to be a terrorist?"

The speech had a tremendous effect in the House and outside. Those European Councillors of the Corporation who on the former occasion had attempted to shelve discussion of Sir Charles Tegart's speech on the argument that the Corporation should make sure of its own grounds, did not even dare open their lips, not to speak of repeating the calumny against the Corporation in defence of Sir Charles Tegart.

## MAYOR

On another momentous occasion Bidhan had to exercise extraordinary tact in moving a resolution in the Corporation. It was one to put on record the Corporation's "sense of grief at the execution of Srijut Dinesh Chandra Gupta" who had earlier been hanged in the Alipore Central Jail on conviction for his complicity in the thrilling invasion of the Writers' Buildings in Calcutta in which Lt.-Col. Simpson, the I.G. of prisons, had been shot dead and Binoy and Badal who along with Dinesh had conducted the raid had died following self-administration of poison. Dinesh also had taken his share of the poison which however did not succeed in killing him. He was taken to the hospital under arrest, treated to the point of complete recovery and then placed on his trial at the end of which he was convicted and sentenced to death. Such was the person whose death was to be mourned by the Corporation.

Mayor Bidhan tactfully took upon himself the task of giving expression to the feelings of all which was the effective way of preventing an acrimonious controversy over a solemn subject. What he said on the occasion bears reproduction *in extenso*. Said he:

"As a matter of personal conviction, as a matter of policy followed by the Congress, one does not accept the method adopted by him. But at the same time we cannot but show our respect and pay our homage to the courage and devotion, however misdirected it might have been, which he (Dinesh) showed even to the last moment when he gladly, from all accounts, put the hangman's noose round his neck and almost the last words he uttered were *Bande Mataram*."

"A Judge of the High Court," Bidhan continued, "Mr. Justice Buckland said in his finding that he felt that this young man was not actuated by any sense of self-interest or personal hate. As a matter of fact, Mr. Justice Buckland was simply recording the verdict of history. We have read instances in history when the perpetrators of acts like this in one generation and punished for them, have been

DR. B. C. ROY

acclaimed as martyrs by the next generation. Therefore let us pay our respect to the courage and devotion shown by this young man. I would ask members to show their respect by standing."

No exception was taken to the procedure by any member of the House and it was long after such a performance by Bidhan that Mr. Campbell Forrester made the full-throated admission on the floor of the House that "not a single individual found fault with" the Mayor during his term of office.

Later, Mahatma Gandhi having heard of the resolution wanted it to be withdrawn as he felt that it might be misinterpreted. Almost in the identical case of Bhagat Singh, Gandhiji himself withdrew the resolution passed at the Karachi Congress. As desired by Gandhiji, at the time of the confirmation of the proceedings on the resolution on Dinesh Chandra Gupta, Mayor Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy suggested that although it might not be possible to expunge the resolution, it should be placed on record his opinion that he wanted to have it withdrawn in accordance with the wishes of the Mahatma.

In the sphere of administration Bidhan leading the Congress Party in the Corporation sincerely attempted to fill in the details of the picture of which the outlines had been left on the canvas by Deshbandhu. Throughout the long period of his stewardship, the Corporation made ever increasing provisions for expansion of free education, free medical aid to the poor, better roads, improved lighting, increased water supply etc.,etc. As a rule, Bidhan used to be on the Budget Special Committee and every time he had anything to do with the Budget he could discover some still untapped or inadequately tapped source of income to find the wherewithal to effect expansion, however small, of beneficent services. He was not in favour of going to the Government every time the Corporation was in financial difficulty, for, as he explained in his Budget speech in 1944, easy financial accommodation promoted a spirit of unhealthy complacency in the Corporation, while every opportunity given to the

## MAYOR

Government to oblige the Corporation automatically strengthened also the grip of the former over the latter. He encouraged the Corporation to rely increasingly on self-help and to tap all possible sources of income. In the same year, 1944, he persuaded the Corporation to raise its estimate of income by providing for the sale or leasing out of Corporation lands lying unutilised and the increase was appreciable enough to enable the raising of the estimates on the expenditure side as well. Even as early as 1933 he had made such advance on the administrative front as to be able to claim that they had "enunciated certain definite policies in the matter of asphalting roads, removal of refuse, medical relief", etc. To Bidhan specially goes the credit for laying down a set of Rules governing the sanction of grants-in-aid to hospitals and charitable dispensaries. One of his acts as Mayor was to introduce competitive examination for recruitment to the Corporation's clerical services.

Bidhan not only followed the philosophy of Deshbandhu in working out his programme but he distinguished himself by contributing something more to it. A common criticism then was, as it is now, that the achievements of the Corporation fell short of the requirements of the rate-payers, that the ideal set before it by Deshbandhu had not been realised. This criticism Bidhan answered at some length in the course of his reply to the felicitations offered him at the conclusion of each of his terms as Mayor. On such occasions he would narrate the achievements, give comparative figures to show what had been done and firmly proclaim that the achievement was something which the Congress Party could be legitimately proud of. "The Corporation," said he on March 31, 1932, "has changed out of recognition since 1923-1924 when you, gentlemen, came in with the Congress banner in your hands." He would, at the same time, be equally outspoken in his appreciation of the magnitude of the task remaining still unfulfilled. With such acknowledgment made in all humility, however, would come the exposition of the philosophy of the greater achievement of striving.

"The Corporation would never come to a day," he said in March, 1933, "when it can say, 'we are perfect.' Because as we gain in experience our ideals will grow correspondingly. If they do not grow then we shall know that we have come to the end of our achievements."

So he would let the ideal grow and recede farther and farther so that the striving to reach the ideal, to realise it might also grow in intensity. To the mind that evolved such a philosophy, work automatically became an end in itself,—its own reward, the achievement progressively diminishing in importance as a factor to be reckoned with in the performance of one's public duties. Bidhan had his own way of re-affirming and re-interpreting the *Karma Yoga* of Hindu philosophy. "There is," he said on one occasion, already referred to, "only one word I want to hear from those who called upon me to serve them and that is that at the end of my career I should hear, 'Right, you have served well'." On another occasion closely following, he passionately declared as follows:

"I have one weakness in me and that is madness for work .... We have done well but much more remains to be done. During the present year in office I hope to face those problems. Whether you like it or not, whether it is a part of my function or not, I refuse to occupy this (Mayoral) Chair merely as an ornamental figurehead."

This passion for work led him not only to spend, as already stated, several hours daily in the Corporation office, not only to give audience and patient hearing to any person who sought interview with him,—persons who, according to a non-Congress Councillor, could hardly dream of meeting the Mayor in person,—but also to severely castigate, as befits the leader, those members of the Congress Party who did not take up seriously their duties as Councillors. On one occasion in the 'forties he publicly deplored that the Budget Special Committee "seldom had a quorum" and caustically said that he was "astonished" to find "levity of a most surprising character" in the members of the Com-

## MAYOR

mittee,—“members hanging back in the corridors and verandahs round this Chamber and behaving not like City fathers but like city children.” Such reaction to levity was natural to one who had taken his own work in the Corporation in the spirit of grim seriousness.

A Review of Bidhan’s work in the Corporation would not be complete without a reference to the very interesting exposition he once gave of the relationship between the Corporation and the Government. Those were the days when conflict and clashes between the two were matters of almost daily occurrence. Referring on March 23, 1933, to the continuing conflict, gravely mentioned by one Councillor in the course of his speech, Bidhan suddenly left the particulars to rise to a significant height of generalisation. •

“If I am a true prophet,” he said, “if I have any foresight, I predict that when a democratic Government comes into being, when we have an Executive Government which is responsible to the Legislature, you will find this conflict would grow bitter and more bitter for the reason that there will then be two bodies both claiming to represent the people,—not one body which is at present a bureaucratic body but two bodies which would both try to prove to the world that they represent the people. One body, namely, the Legislature will have the whips and the Corporation Councillor will not be worth his position in the Corporation if he is not prepared to stand up and fight against usurpation by Government of the powers which are vested in the Corporation by Statute.”

Perhaps the time has come when the City Fathers may stand up and tell Chief Minister Bidhan Chandra Roy that history has proved him to have been a true prophet even in 1933.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WITH DESHBANDHU CHITTARANJAN DAS

In the preceding Chapter mention was made of Bidhan's association with Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das since his election contest in 1923. It was in the course of his practice that Dr. Roy first came in touch with Barrister Chittaranjan Das. Bidhan also knew him a little socially. Now and then they met at different places—in the houses of common friends—and discussed the general problems of the country, but the contact in such cases was very slender. Chittaranjan Das became a very successful Barrister and gradually came into political lime-light, particularly after his famous speech in Chittagong in 1917. He was not one of those conventional politicians following the Gandhian austerity. He was regarded by the people who knew him as a very successful Barrister who lived a luxurious life, who was hardly without a cigar in his mouth and who was accustomed to have drinks every day.

It was in August 1920 at the Calcutta special session of the Congress that Bidhan came in close touch with him. In that session Chittaranjan appeared on the A.I.C.C. platform to oppose Mahatmaji's Non-Co-Operation Movement. He was unsuccessful in his contest with Gandhiji in Calcutta but took a large contingent of delegates to Nagpur at the next session where he succeeded. Later he became a convert to Gandhiji's programmes and on his return to Calcutta he decided to give up his practice, as well as his drinks and cigars. It seemed amazing to those people who knew him intimately. Bidhan was a frequent visitor to his house as a medical practitioner and the day Chittaranjan gave up his drinks and smoke, Dr. Roy revered him all the more for his great strength of mind in discarding long-standing habits. Recalling his admiration of Chittaranjan, Bidhan



*S. Chowdhury,  
1951.*

DESHBANDHU CHITTARANJAN DAS



WITH DESHBANDHU CHITTARANJAN DAS

said: "It may be comparatively easy for some people to give up their source of income, but to my mind to abjure a habit which had grown for years—habit of smoking and drinking—in one day indicated a strength of mind and character which was unique."

Soon after Chittaranjan's return from Nagpur, he was arrested and Bidhan lost touch with him until one day in August 1923 when he was sent for by Deshbandhu and was asked of his prospect for election to the Legislative Council from the North Calcutta Municipal Constituency—the home constituency of Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee who had been elected from there on a previous occasion. By that time Bidhan had begun his electioneering work, and when he met Chittaranjan he had already completed nearly five months of his campaign. Here it must be pointed out that when Bidhan stood for election he was not actuated by a spirit of opposition to Sir Surendra Nath because he was helping Dyarchy in Bengal but "it was," as he confessed, "more an effort on my part to get in rather than to keep Sir Surendra Nath out." Bidhan was somewhat bewildered to hear from Chittaranjan Das when he met him that he had obtained the sanction of the Congress permitting him to form the Swarajya Party within the Congress and to run the election on behalf of the Party. Bidhan was further told that Chittaranjan and Pandit Motilal Nehru were then leading the Swarajya Party. "I was bewildered", confesses Dr. Roy, "because in those days I kept very little touch with the political movements in the country, and therefore wondered what Chittaranjan meant by his scheme of smashing Dyarchy through the Legislature." Busy in his practice, Bidhan had little time then to devote to politics, and except casually reading the Montague Chelmsford Report, he did not keep any touch with the operation of Dyarchy in Bengal.

Chittaranjan Das then asked him: "Will you sign my Swarajya Party pledge?"

"No", said Bidhan.

Then Chittaranjan demanded, "Why?"

Bidhan then told him that he had been working for his election for nearly five months as an Independent candidate and that if he became a party candidate now, it would appear that he was anxious to get in somehow or anyhow. Moreover, he informed Chittaranjan that he would be misunderstood by his constituency and would not like to change colour at that stage. Thereupon Chittaranjan said that he would put up a candidate against Bidhan. In his characteristic way Dr. Roy replied, "Thank you—such a step would naturally mean an easy victory for Sir Surendra Nath, because my approach to voters would be similar to that of the Swarajya Party candidate, and therefore our voters will be divided, leaving the line clear for Sir Surendra Nath."

Bidhan added: "My object in opposing Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee was not that he was a limb of Dyarchy but that he was a part of the Government which kept the people of our country under subjugation."

Chittaranjan Das dismissed Bidhan with the observation that he would send for him in another fortnight. After a fortnight they again met and this time Chittaranjan told Bidhan that he had decided not to put up a candidate against him and that although he had refused to sign the Swarajya Party pledge, he would ask Congressmen to support Dr. Roy because, he felt, he was the best instrument to kill Dyarchy represented by Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee.

Bidhan's association with Chittaranjan became closer during the election campaign. They met frequently and discussed various matters. The defeat of Sir Surendra Nath in the election was a matter of great satisfaction to Chittaranjan Das from his point of view. But throughout the period of working in the Legislature up till his death, he was very keen that Dr. Roy should not leave his Independent Party headed by Byomkesh Chakravarti, and join the Swarajya Party. Chittaranjan even felt that it was a great help to the Swarajya Party in the Legislature if Bidhan remained an Independent.

As already said, Bidhan was not a member of the Congress

WITH DESHBANDHU CHITTARANJAN DAS

and yet they of the Congress Party had great reliance on him and allowed him facilities for work in the Legislature on Nationalist lines.

"This is why I feel rather embarrassed now," says Dr. Roy, "when anybody comes and tells me that he cannot work for the country unless he gets a position in the Congress." Without holding any Congress office and without aspiring for one, he worked for the country more or less inspired by the Congress ideals.

During the year and a half that Chittaranjan was alive after Bidhan entered the Legislature, they had very close association with each other. In fact, as time progressed, Chittaranjan was depending on Bidhan more and more in various matters. Whenever difficulties arose, Dr. Roy was called in to give his advice and help. "I was gratified," declares Bidhan, "in receiving such confidence from so great a man like Chittaranjan Das." On many occasions Bidhan was asked to undertake very difficult work in connection with the political campaigns even though he did not belong to Chittaranjan's Swarajya Party or to the Congress.

In December 1924, Chittaranjan created a Trust bequeathing all his private properties for the women of the country, and selected Bidhan as one of its members without even formally asking his consent. So much was Chittaranjan's trust in Dr. Roy. "Why should he have taken me as a Trustee for managing his personal estate which he had given to the country, I do not know," confesses Bidhan, "but as the charge was given to me, I accepted the assignment." This Trust property is now known as the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan which has grown up from a very small beginning into a huge institution in memory of the great leader Deshbandhu.

At about the same time in December 1924, Chittaranjan had an idea of collecting some funds for the improvement of village conditions. In the budget session early in 1924 Bidhan had made the suggestion on behalf of the Independent Party that the Government should create small Trust Boards for developing rural areas of the province in the agri-

### DR. B. C. ROY

cultural, educational and medical spheres. But the Government would not agree to the suggestion. Therefore Chittaranjan thought that he might make a personal appeal to the people to collect some funds for village uplift. Here, again, after collecting the funds, Chittaranjan without asking Bidhan made him a Trustee and Secretary of the Village Reorganisation Board.

While returning from the Belgaum Congress, Chittaranjan had taken some food on the train and when he reached Calcutta he was suffering from acute blood dysentery. For several days his condition was very serious, and Dr. Roy was in charge of his treatment. "I could feel," reveals Bidhan, "that he was depending more and more upon me as regards his health, as well as his political activities."

The Government called a meeting of the Legislative Council about the first week of January 1925 to consider the question of reviving the posts of Ministers whose salaries had been thrown out during the previous budget session and on account of which the Ministry had to be suspended. It was a crucial meeting. There was great speculation as to whether Chittaranjan Das would be strong enough to go to the Legislature on that day. He insisted upon Dr. Roy's taking him to the meeting of the Legislative Council. Courageously Bidhan took Chittaranjan in an invalid chair into the Council Chamber. Not only was Chittaranjan present in the House but he delivered a most marvellous speech which turned the scale against the Ministry and the Nationalist forces defeated the Government. Bidhan took Chittaranjan back home after the meeting, and for several weeks the great leader was lying in bed and was very weak.

It was at this stage that Chittaranjan had been corresponding with Lord Birkenhead, who was then the Secretary of State for India, about alteration in the system of Dyarchy and giving more powers to the Ministers. One day he suddenly sent for Bidhan and told him that he had decided to put his name as one of the new Ministers in case Lord Birkenhead agreed to the proposal. Bidhan did not know

## WITH DESHBANDHU CHITTARANJAN DAS

the proposal, nor was he very keen on becoming a Minister.. However, he did not think it necessary to formally accept Chittaranjan's suggestion, because it was more or less in the sphere of speculation. In any case, Chittaranjan had been thinking about it and his ideas on the subject were very forcefully expressed in his speech at the Faridpur Provincial Conference a few weeks before his death.

"Although there was not much of organisational contact between Chittaranjan Das and myself," recalls Dr. Roy, "yet mentally I was getting closer to him during the few years that I came to know him intimately. There was no doubt that there had grown between us a community of interests which politically was very ill-defined, and yet the personal contact was great. I have never ceased to have admiration for the life of Chittaranjan Das, not because he was a very successful lawyer, nor because he was a Statesman and politician, but because he was a man who knew how to give up everything he possessed, every luxury that he was accustomed to, as soon as he was satisfied that it was the right action. It is very rare to find another instance of this type in our world."

## CHAPTER XV

### ASSOCIATION WITH SIR NILRATAN SARKAR AND DR. SURESH SARBADHIKARI

Long before Bidhan came to Calcutta to join the Medical College as a student, Sir Nilratan Sarkar had established a great reputation as a physician. Even so early as 1901 when Bidhan first came to Calcutta, Sir Nilratan occupied a position as the most eminent consultant in Bengal. Incidentally, it must be said that Sir Nilratan Sarkar like Dr. Bidhan Roy had pecuniary difficulties in the early days of his life. In fact, it would surprise many to-day to know that Dr. Nilratan Sarkar had first to take up a 2 years' course in vernacular in the Campbell School to qualify himself as a humble practitioner. By hard effort he subsequently passed the Intermediate and the B.A. examinations and later took his M.B. and M.D. degrees. In no time his talent as a physician came to be recognised, and he soon rose head and shoulders above all the other medical practitioners, Indian and foreign.

After joining the Calcutta Medical College, Bidhan had, from time to time, occasions, as a medical student, to accompany patients to the house of Dr. Nilratan Sarkar and also to take him to see patients in their houses. Young Bidhan was greatly impressed with the great Dr. Sarkar, not merely on the depth of his knowledge but also on the reasoned approach he made towards diseases and their cure. It was this very rational method which gained a great reputation for Dr. Nilratan. He was himself a brilliant scholar of the University and he shared his knowledge with medical practitioners and students who always found him immensely helpful. Dr. Nilratan Sarkar was an Examiner at the final M.B. and L.M.S. examinations of Bidhan and entertained a very high opinion about him. In fact, Dr. Nilratan was very surprised

## WITH SIR NILRATAN AND DR. SARBADHIKARI

to find that Bidhan could not pass in Midwifery at the final M.B. examination after having secured first class marks in all the other subjects. Of course, he like Col. Lukis knew why Bidhan failed in Peek's subject. Dr. Nilratan's behaviour towards Bidhan when he appeared subsequently for the L.M.S. examination was very courteous and gentle.

As has been said already, after passing his examination, Bidhan started practice in Calcutta and rented a house which was very close to Sir Nilratan's on Harrison Road. From time to time young Dr. Bidhan used to go to Nilratan's house with patients, and he was very tolerant towards all junior practitioners who approached him for consultation. Dr. Nilratan Sarkar was also Bidhan's Examiner at the M.D. examination and he was one of the first to congratulate Dr. Roy on getting his Doctorate in Medicine of the Calcutta University within two years of his passing the L.M.S.

After Bidhan returned from England, he naturally sought the advice of the senior Dr. Nilratan Sarkar as to the place, wherein he should set up his practice. Humorously, Dr. Nilratan said that they should make the Street called Harrison Road of Calcutta, the Harley Street of London, as already three or four good doctors were residing there at the time. So he wanted Bidhan to settle down in Harrison Road. "This was a mild compliment to me," says Bidhan, "which I appreciated very greatly." As Dr. Roy's practice began to grow, his contact with Sir Nilratan also became very intimate. They often used to meet together in treating a patient.

Another famous doctor of the time was Dr. Suresh Sarbadhikari who was an outstanding surgeon. Both Sir Nilratan and Dr. Sarbadhikari were friends and followed a high standard of medical ethics which they imparted to their juniors. Towards the end of the last century, Sir Nilratan and Dr. Sarbadhikari decided to charge the same fee as was being charged by the British officers of the Indian Medical Service —that is to say, Rs. 16/- for a visit. With it goes a little incident.

When Dr. Sarbadhikari's father who was also a well-known medical practitioner in Calcutta had heard of this resolve on the part of his son and of Dr. Sarkar, he sent for Suresh and asked him whether it was a fact that they had decided to charge Rs. 16/- . On being told that it was so, father Sarbadhikari asked his son not to be rash, for he wondered whether anybody would call them in for consultation and pay Rs. 16/- when the I.M.S. officers could be had also for the same fee. He further said that he had grown old in practice and yet he did not charge more than Rs. 8/- for a visit. That, however, did not change the resolution of Drs. Sarbadhikari and Sarkar who stuck to their resolve. It was a departure for Indian practitioners to attempt at equality of status with their European ~~compeers~~. Nevertheless, Sarkar and Sarbadhikari revolutionised the attitude of Indian patients towards physicians in Calcutta and Bengal. Till then, people thought that it was only a white man, because of his superior position, who could command a higher fee. From that time on, they began to realise that even Indian practitioners could do so. As a result, the status of Indian practitioners rose high. Both Nilratan Sarkar and Sarbadhikari also resolved that they would rather forego their remuneration and treat poor patients free than lower the rate of their fees. This was a particular standard of medical practice that made a great impression on Bidhan's mind. He realised that the correct approach was that every man could claim the money value of his labour. It added to the dignity of labour of the individual if he knew that he got whatever he was worth.

In 1912 there was a Royal Public Service Commission which was enquiring into the conditions of services in India. Sir Nilratan Sarkar was one of the witnesses examined by this Commission. He was asked whether an Indian in service who possessed qualifications equal to those of a European was given the same emoluments. He quoted the case of Bidhan and said that although Dr. Roy had passed the highest examinations in Medicine and Surgery and was in the Service, no consideration was given to him for his qualifications. Sir

## WITH SIR NILRATAN AND DR. SARBADHIKARI

Nilratan further mentioned that while Bidhan had stood first in the M.R.C.P., a member of the I.M.S., whose position according to merit was much lower in the examination, had got a very distinct lift after he came out from England, and Dr. Roy had to remain exactly in the same position in which he was before he went to England.

Sir Nilratan had always felt that an injustice had been done to Dr. Roy as he realised the brilliant qualities of Bidhan. As such, he was always anxious to give Dr. Roy every consideration he deserved, and in many places he would tell patients that Bidhan was a thoroughly reliable doctor. Whether in the Senate of the Calcutta university or in the R. G. Kar Medical College, Sir Nilratan and Dr. Roy used to work together for the same objective.

Although Sir Nilratan did not take part in active politics, he was a devout Nationalist. Any movement which was meant for the benefit of human beings had always his support. Thus he actively cooperated in the development of the Jadavpur Tuberculosis Hospital which was started by Bidhan, and also in the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan which was being built up as a memorial to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, apart from the various other organisations meant to improve the lot of the common man. Whenever his services were required, Sir Nilratan would give up even his professional work for devoting his time and energy to honorary activities intended for the benefit of the nation.

Towards the latter part of his life, Sir Nilratan often used to send for Bidhan to see patients in his own house. Thus Dr. Roy came closer and closer to him and began to understand and appreciate the mainsprings of his successful life.

While Dr. Nilratan Sarkar had a placid and equitable temperament, Dr. Suresh Sarbadhikari was emotional and almost excitable. This gave him a vivacity which was rarely found in a person of his physical mould. He often used to tell the story that even before he joined the Medical College, it was discovered that he had a chronic heart disease and his father, therefore, would not let him continue his education.

He however applied and got admitted. The Principal of the Medical College on one occasion saw the pulsating arteries of his neck, and at once thought there was something very wrong with his heart. He examined him and then wrote to his father about his joining the Medical College. His father was annoyed and locked young Suresh up in a room, to prevent him from attending the College. Young Sarbadhikari jumped out of the window and went to the College with the result that his father had to yield to the wish of his son. Dr. Sarbadhikari was a short man, almost skin and bone, while Sir Nilratan Sarkar had a solid physiognomy. Dr. Sarbadhikari was very outspoken. Both Drs. Sarkar and Sarbadhikari would resent any injustice being done in any sphere of public life. But while the former would quietly express his indignation, the latter would burst forth. Bidhan's first contact with Sarbadhikari was when the latter was trying to mobilise Bengali young men for service in Mesopotamia during World War I. Sarbadhikari was anxious to get recognition for the Bengali youths as soldiers. He collected a large number of people around him, and in order not to lose time he spent more than Rs. 300/- in sending a telegram to the Director-General, Indian Medical Service, asking him to select 250 names contained in the telegram. The last words in the telegram were:—"As regards myself, I am prepared to take up any job from sweeper upwards." The Director-General telegraphed back, saying:—"Were you standing on your head or heels when you suggested that the combined strength of the Indian Medical Service and the Royal Army Medical Corps would not be able to manage this little war?"

That was in 1914, but before the year was out, the same Director-General asked Dr. Sarbadhikari to register the names of all persons who wanted to volunteer for service in the War. Thus he won a great fight carried almost with a lone hand. He was very proud of this achievement, because he thought he succeeded in pricking the bubble of any delusion that Bengali youths could not join the War.

Dr. Sarbadhikari was a brave man and sometimes his

## WITH SIR NILRATAN AND DR. SARBADHIKARI

bravery led him to be uncautious. He was the first person in Bengal to successfully operate on an Ovarian Tumour in a private house, and that too on his own wife. Recalling it, Dr. Roy says: "It required a great deal of courage to be able to do so, particularly in the nineties of the last century."

Sarbadhikari had a warm heart, a lively temperament, a short tongue, a keen sense of humour and an impressive mind.

In the Senate of the Calcutta University, to which Bidhan was elected a Fellow, he was an associate of Dr. Sarbadhikari. They worked together as they felt that they could develop the country and improve the morale of the people by not making compromises with injustice and unfairness, but by exposing them wherever they were found. Dr. Sarbadhikari warmly applauded the attitude taken by Bidhan in his fight with the British officers of the Indian Medical Service and often openly congratulated him on his boldness to resist unwarranted domination. Dr. Sarbadhikari, although physically a weak man, never allowed the infirmity to get the better of him but worked hard for various public organisations. He was closely associated with the Carmichael Medical College to which Bidhan had been also attached since 1919. He was then the President of the Bengal Medical Education Society.

Soon after Bidhan joined the Carmichael College, he felt that the senior members of the institution were not very happy over his being there as Professor of Medicine. Probably he had this feeling from the attitude they adopted towards him.

An incident which occurred at this time is well worth recalling. A few months after Dr. Roy had joined the College, a meeting of the Bengal Medical Education Society was held for the election of a member of the Governing Body who should be a medical practitioner. There were two candidates—Dr. B. C. Roy and Dr. Mrigendra Lal Mitra. Dr. Mitra was much senior to Bidhan and was also his Examiner for the M.B. nearly 15 years ago. It might be that they thought that Bidhan would withdraw his candidature

### DR. B. C. ROY

for the sake of a senior member and would not contest Dr. Mitra. But as his name was already there, Bidhan thought that he should leave the matter to the decision of the members of the Society. Though he was a new man in the institution and had no opportunity of intimate contact with most of the members who were present at the meeting, he was confident that he would be elected. Votes were taken by ballot and tellers were appointed to count them. Dr. Sarbadhikari who was presiding got up and said that the record of the ballot showed that Dr. Roy had got 19 votes and Dr. Mrigendra Lal Mitra had obtained 18. Then he said that he had not yet voted and that he would cast his vote in favour of Dr. Mitra. This made the voting strength 19: 19. Dr. Sarbadhikari then gave his casting vote as President of the meeting also in favour of Dr. Mitra and declared him elected.

Having been associated with Dr. Sarbadhikari in the Senate where also similar instances had perhaps happened, Dr. Roy was greatly shocked to find that the erstwhile critic had become an advocate of this method of inequity. Inwardly Dr. Roy thought that he would draw the attention of the members to the procedure adopted by Dr. Sarbadhikari, but did not do so, as he did not want to create a disturbance at the meeting. He realised that he should exercise his patience and the injustice would be known to all concerned. On returning home, Dr. Roy wrote a letter to Dr. Sarbadhikari pointing out to him the irregularity to which he was a party. Bidhan wrote:

"In the Senate you had on several occasions drawn the attention of members to actions taken by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee and termed them as 'nepotism'. I find, however, that anyone who sits in the chair and possesses authority is likely to commit similar irregularity. You copied Sir Asutosh on all fours minus his other great qualities. You must have realised by now the favouritism you displayed in the matter of putting in Dr. Mitra as a member. It was wrong; it was unjust; it was parochial. I did not, however, raise any objection at the meeting, be-

## WITH SIR NILRATAN AND DR. SARBADHIKARI

cause I felt that if some persons thought that I was not fit to be a member of the Governing Body at that stage, it was only a matter of time, for if and when I deserved to be a member, nobody would be in a position to stop me from being one."

Next day, Dr. Sarbadhikari met Bidhan in the College and said: "You have given me the biggest slap that I ever received in my life. I feel that I have done wrong and I should admit it. I should declare the election of Dr. Mitra void and have another meeting for the election of a member."

Bidhan replied: "Sir, you have made one mistake—I would not like you to make another. There is no hurry about my getting into the Managing Committee. As you have already taken some action, however irregular it might be, it is better to let it remain as it is, at the present moment."

Dr. Roy and Dr. Sarbadhikari came to regard each other with friendliness and in later years they were very closely associated in mind and spirit. A few days before his death, Dr. Sarbadhikari told Bidhan that he had three ambitions in life. One was to raise the R. G. Kar Medical School into a College. He had succeeded in that endeavour. He was responsible for collecting money which the Government wanted the School to raise before it could be converted into a College and before Government could pay their grant. The Government demand was that the institution should be able to raise Rs. 2,50,000/- before the 31st March, 1916. There was one subscriber who had signed for Rs. 10,000/- but it was only to be paid as soon as the School authorities had collected Rs. 2,40,000/-. On the morning of the 30th March it was found that the total amount realised by then was only Rs. 2,20,000/-, so that neither the donation which that gentleman had promised to give could be realised from him, nor could the School authorities fulfil the condition for obtaining Government grant, viz., collecting Rs. 2,50,000/- by the 31st of March. Emotional as Dr. Sarbadhikari was and yet full of optimism, he put in the Rs. 20,000/- worth of Government papers he possessed and gave them to the institution. He

### DR. B. C. ROY

. thus secured the donation of Rs. 10,000/- from the gentleman and on the 31st of March he deposited Rs. 2,50,000/- and obtained the full quota of the Government grant. Recalling the incident Dr. Roy said: "Such was the man who never swerved from the path of duty, who never relaxed his efforts in achieving what he had put his heart to."

The second ambition of Dr. Sarbadhikari was that he should be able to command fees as a medical practitioner, equal to the highest fee which any practitioner—medical or legal—had ever charged. He said that he had the satisfaction of charging Rs. 5,000/- for one day's medical service from a patient who could afford it. It often happened that when Dr. Sarbadhikari went to a patient's house he would refuse to take fees if he found that the patient appeared to be unable to pay. He would return the fees in such cases and yet in order to establish the position of the Indian Medical practitioners he had aimed at the objective mentioned above. He did show to the world then that an Indian medical practitioner could charge as much as or more than any European in the profession had ever done.

His third ambition in life was that he should raise the status of Bengalis in the Military field by his efforts in the First World War, for which he obtained the title of Lt.-Col. and G.I.E. from the Government. He proved that Bengali youths could also fight, and fight well.

## CHAPTER XVI

### INDUSTRIALIST

A versatile genius like Bidhan could not confine himself to one particular field of work. Genius, as Balzac said, is intensity, or as Carlyle would have it, is an immense capacity for taking trouble. Probably that explains how from the early years of his profession, Dr. Roy drifted from one activity to another and identified himself with ever so many, to all of which he gave the best of his attention. Thus while he developed into an extremely eminent medical man at a comparatively young age, he interested himself in the work of the University and entered the political arena in a straight and mighty fight against Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee. We have already seen his great talents as a Parliamentarian. He would not confine himself either to this or that. From politics he went to civics devoting his full energy to the work of the Corporation both as an Alderman and as the Mayor for two terms. Unlike others who were entering one sphère of activity leaving the previous, Bidhan kept himself fully interested in all the fields he entered and distributed his attention alike. He went far ahead, even thinking of developing the industrial potentiality of the country, not for any personal ambition, but for the national progress.

In the early years of his life as we have seen he was engaged in the struggle for finding money to prosecute his studies both in India and abroad. Soon after passing out from the Medical Colleges he had to face competition in the professional field. He had to find time for teaching medicine almost from the beginning of his professional career and his spare time was taken up entirely in creating a position for himself in the medical world. Though oftentimes his constructive mind thought of industrial activities that could be promoted, he had not the money for any such adventure or

### DR. B. C. ROY

pursuit. From the days of the Swadeshi movement of 1905-6, Bidhan had often dreamt that the future of our country would depend on the industrial progress we made. It was a mere desire for an objective without any serious intention of personally engaging in industrial pursuits. He was also very interested in the industrial ventures of leaders like Sir Prafulla Chandra Ray and Sir Nilratan Sarkar. Of course he had then no means to assess what their capacity for business management was, but it made a great impression on his mind that men who were either professors or doctors should devote their attention and energy to the development of indigenous industries. By this time his brother, Sadhan Roy, had come from England having been qualified in Electrical Engineering and Bidhan had to help him in a way by his advice to develop his industries.

It is interesting to recall how a chain of circumstances manoeuvred to drag Bidhan into the industrial field. Here is the story in his own words:

"I went up in October 1920 to Shillong with my people. We had miscalculated the quantity of petrol that we would require to go from Amingaon, the border station of Gauhati, to Shillong, a distance of 68 miles. After we had travelled 52 miles out of 68, I found that we had run out of petrol. I was driving the car, and seven people were in it. Private individuals were allowed to take their own car up. There were then no taxis available to passengers, who used to have seats in the vehicles engaged by the Motor Company. We started rather late from Amingaon and when we covered about 52 miles the petrol ran short. The darkness of the evening had come down and we were in a very great predicament. Most of the other cars had gone away. The only vehicle that remained behind was a mail van carrying the mails as well as our servants, who had been put in it. When the mail van came behind our car I told the driver of the van that I would not let him pass my car until he gave me petrol to go up to Shillong. After some discussion he gave us the petrol and we started.

When we reached Shillong it was absolutely dark. I had to ask a shop-keeper, who happened to be a Bengalee, the direction in which I had to go to the house I had rented. He gave me some directions which were absolutely impossible for me to follow in the darkness. I then had to agree to take three Khasis, the local inhabitants of Shillong, in addition to the seven that we had in the car so that they might guide us to our destination. The whole town appeared to be very pleasant, but there were absolutely no lights. I was told that the night belonged to that half of the month when the Municipality did not think it necessary to light the acetylene gas lamps with which the town was lit during the other half of the month.

The next morning I was charmed with the scenery of Shillong, but felt rather depressed that such a fine place did not have electricity. I asked a doctor friend of mine as to why nothing had been done to electrify the town. He referred me to a friend of his, Shri R. Dutt, who had along with another taken a lease of the water falls—Beardon Falls—but had done nothing to generate electric power. Shri Dutt came to see me and we discussed the question of forming a company to generate electricity and supply it to Shillong. I came down from Shillong and after a few days consulted my brother as to the feasibility of a scheme for generating electricity. After some discussion we agreed to apply for a licence for doing so.

At this stage my interest in developing this Company was enhanced by the fact that the Deputy Commissioner of Shillong, a non-regulated area of Assam, was very much inclined to give the licence to an Englishman, a Capt. Morrow, in preference to our scheme although the Captain's scheme was for generating electricity from coal or diesel oil rather than from water, as he had no control over the falls. Obviously this was a proposition which could not be compared with the hydro-electric scheme and we therefore pressed the Government to accept our proposal. The struggle continued for nine months. The

British Deputy Commissioner was naturally greatly in favour of the British applicant. The matter went up to the Government of India and eventually we got the licence. I struggled so far in obtaining the licence not so much out of an anxiety for developing the industry or making money, but to fulfil my desire of winning in the contest with a British competitor. Having taken this matter seriously up and having received the licence it was necessary that we should show to the Britishers that an Indian firm, particularly a Bengalee firm, could also rise to the occasion and make a success of the venture. Very often I had to go up to Shillong to see things for myself, and although I was not an expert in electricity, I could solve ultimately the difficulties that came in the way. In the end I had the satisfaction of giving electricity to Shillong within 18 months after the grant of the licence. I was told that it was a record time for any concern of this type to be completed. But our struggle was not over. After 9 months of working for the concern I was suddenly faced with a notice from the Member-in-charge of the Public Works Department of Assam, who was controlling the electrical ventures in the Province, that our licence was cancelled for not fulfilling the terms of the contract. I at once knew that the whole finding of the Government was based on wrong reports. I felt it was my duty, therefore, to expose it and I did it so effectively that Sir John Kerr, the then Governor of Assam, who was also the Member-in-charge of the Public Works Department, withdrew the notice cancelling our licence. Since then we have been able to supply the town with electricity for 32 years from 1923.

This venture gave me an idea that an industrialist should not give to the share-holders more than a limited amount of dividend even if the profits were capable of bearing higher dividends. The principle we have followed in this concern has been that after allowing for a dividend of 6 to 7 per cent. of the available balance from year to year we either plow back the remainder to the Company

## INDUSTRIALIST

for development purposes or utilise it to increase the emoluments of the workers or to reduce the rate of current for the consumer. Thus it was that even unskilled workers who joined us for Rs. 30/- in 1923, are now getting more than three times that amount. There is hardly any worker, who is getting less than Rs. 60/- as emolument. The current rate has also been reduced. This industrial venture gave me the self-confidence in handling industry from a rational point of view."

Since then Bidhan has been responsible for starting and developing various other industries and he has given his advice and guidance to many others and in almost all cases, it must be said to his credit, he was able to make the industry successful, at the same time keeping to the principles indicated above. Today Bidhan confesses that "I am beginning to realise that the whole world is a big industry where we labour and struggle. We have to gather on the one hand better efficiency in the concern, and on the other provide increased return for labour done."

## CHAPTER XVII

### AS A CONGRESS LEADER

When did Dr. B. C. Roy join the Congress? He does not know. It is certain that the Congress Secretariat cannot produce any record to show on which date in a particular year did Bidhan apply for the primary membership of the Congress. This is not due merely to the vicissitudes through which the Congress has passed. Perhaps Bidhan never formally joined the Congress. His association with Congressmen and Congress work had been so intimate and continuous for some time that his membership of the Congress had come to be regarded by the Party organisers no less than the general public to have been a matter beyond the range of dispute. At this distance of time we can only surmise that on the first occasion when his election to some Congress body had been considered to be necessary by the provincial leadership, some minor office-bearer might have hurriedly placed before him the necessary Forms duly filled in to which he had equally hurriedly appended his signatures. "The letter killeth, the spirit healeth" must have been in the mind of everybody concerned, including Bidhan himself.

In spirit Bidhan had been a Congressman all his life. And he had been, paradoxical though it is to all outward appearances, a Gandhite. Indian history is replete with instances of two outwardly completely dis-similar persons suddenly getting inseparably attached to each other as preceptor and disciple. The relationship between Gandhiji and Bidhan is one of the long series. Enough has been said in the foregoing Chapters to show that the home in which he was born and reared, had been a Sabarmati Ashram in miniature. Even before meeting Gandhiji in person Bidhan must have recognised his own revered parents continuing their being in the joint life of Gandhiji and his spouse and the spirit of his home permeating

## AS A CONGRESS LEADER

the ever-widening field of Gandhiji's activities. Bidhan was drawn to Gandhiji's Congress as naturally as the child is drawn to its home and the event had not to be announced with a flourish. The process was one of natural transition, though Bidhan had been first initiated into the Swarajist politics considered to be the first fruit of revolt against orthodox Gandhism. The process became easier because Bidhan's initiation had been effected by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das than whom no truer Gandhite lived at the time.

Bidhan first met Gandhiji under circumstances eminently favourable to forging an abiding relationship between the two. It was in June 1925, a couple of days after Deshbandhu's death in Darjeeling. Basanti Devi had returned and Gandhiji was staying with her in Deshbandhu's residence on Russa Road. The two were seated together in the same room when Bidhan reached to offer his condolence to the widow of his leader. And as soon as Basanti Devi saw Bidhan, she burst into tears and between paroxysms of sobbing said that had Bidhan been present in Darjeeling to treat Deshbandhu in his illness, the latter would never have died. Bidhan soothed and consoled her as best as he could. After emotion subsided to some extent, Gandhiji pointing to Bidhan asked Basanti Devi who the visitor was. When told that the visitor was Dr. Bidhan Roy, Gandhiji looked at him as Bidhan also looked at Gandhiji. The two pairs of eyes met. "And", said Bidhan years later to a friend while narrating the incident, "there arose an instantaneous feeling of kinship between Gandhiji and myself which nothing could lessen during the ensuing 23 years."

The love at first sight deepened through the knowledge which Gandhiji acquired soon after and the work in co-operation which followed in the context of that knowledge. Deshbandhu had bequeathed all his properties including his residential house to the Nation, formed a Trust to give effect to his will and made Bidhan one of the trustees. This had been in recognition of the genius for constructive work in Bidhan which Deshbandhu had noticed during the two years

. of comradeship between the two in the Bengal Legislative Council. Gandhiji had first seen Bidhan through the eyes of Basanti Devi. For the second time he saw Bidhan through the eyes of Deshbandhu. During the weeks that followed Gandhiji saw him through his own eyes as the two together evolved the plan to perpetuate Deshbandhu's memory in the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan. Gandhiji appealed for funds and it started flowing. Into the collection drive he saw Bidhan import his own dynamism. The success of the drive was spectacular. Before Gandhiji left Calcutta, Bidhan had been made the Secretary of the Trust and put directly in charge of administering the fund that had been raised. This was of comparable significance to the conferment by Gandhiji of the triple crown of Deshbandhu (Presidency of B.P.C.C., Mayoralty of the Corporation and Leadership of the Congress Party in the Council) on J. M. Sen Gupta. And Bidhan's position as a Congress leader of Bengal was put on firm foundation.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, Bidhan drifted into the currents of the Congress politics in Bengal. The prevailing conditions forced the pace of his drift. Deshbandhu had died but after raising a hornet's nest in the Congress organisation with his bold challenge to the non-co-operation programme in its original form. The dispute over Council entry did not die even after the Congress had sanctioned participation in the elections and the Swarajist programme for the wrecking of the Reforms from within. Congressmen in every province were sharply divided into no-changers and pro-changers. The division operated in the most pronounced form in Bengal, the no-changers and the pro-changers acrimoniously fighting each other for the capture of the machinery of the Congress organisation. The pro-changers, i.e., the Swarajists, were in power but had to put in every ounce of their energy in the fight to retain it with the no-changers who also commanded considerable following in the country. It was a tough fight for the pro-changers because the no-changers could always invoke the name of Gandhiji to justify their

### AS A CONGRESS LEADER

onslaughts on the Swarajists. The latter, though resourceful and though they could bank on the spectacular success of their wrecking programme in the Council, were seriously handicapped in certain respects. Their leader, the irreplaceable Deshbandhu, had died. The only other man on their side with a magnetic personality and enjoying the affection of all, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, had been arrested soon after his appointment as the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation and thereafter detained mostly in jail. Eyes therefore turned more and more on Bidhan who had proved himself to be a worthy lieutenant of Deshbandhu and an able Deputy Leader in the Council. He seemed also to possess inexhaustible energy and wonderful organising ability. The discovery was followed by demands on his brain, energy and resourcefulness which he could not always resist. Like him there were four others in the Swarajya Party—Sarat Chandra Bose, Tulsi Charan Goswami, Nalini Ranjan Sarker and Nirmal Chandra Chunder unfit by temperament and training to be leaders of the masses but yielding to none in patriotism, spirit of self-sacrifice, organising ability and possessing, in addition, political talents in abundance. Together they formed a sort of brain-trust for the Swarajya Party in the province and were christened by the contemporary coiners of popular names and phrases as the Big Five of Bengal,—big not so much because they were relatively richer but because each one of them was big in his respective profession or calling and was justifiably credited with the ability to make big contributions to the evolution of ideas and execution of schemes. Bidhan's limitations were well understood and he would seldom be called upon to direct the politics of the polemical type. The first big assignment in the Congress came to him in the form of the offer of the office of the General Secretary of the Reception Committee of the Annual Congress Session held in Calcutta in December, 1928. And Bidhan accepted the offer. "I feel," wrote he much later to a friend, "that my appointment as General Secretary of the Reception Committee was more in recogni-

tion by Congressmen of my organising ability than as a reward for my performances in Congress politics. Congressmen in general had seen me working in close association with Deshbandhu Das and Gandhiji for four years and they welcomed me for the purpose of organising the session of the Indian National Congress."

Some of the features of the 1928 session of the Congress in Calcutta were not liked by Gandhiji whose mind even then had started thinking of the Congress session in a village in an atmosphere of austere simplicity. But by the standard which the lesser beings employ to judge such functions, the Calcutta session was unique in many respects. Except for the clash between the volunteers and the labour demonstrators which was engineered by some labour leaders determined to discredit the Congress, the session was peacefully held though the debate on many occasions was highly exciting. The session attracted a record number of visitors and also delegates. But sanitation was perfect, water supply never failed and the arrangements for the accommodation and feeding of delegates were not seriously found fault with by anybody. The layout, decoration and lighting added grandeur to a city of huts and tents and at night a fairy touch would be evident. The exhibition under the management of Nalini Ranjan Sarker and the volunteers in khaki khadi and perfect military order under the command of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose enhanced the attraction and the grandeur of the session. The giant show was largely planned by Bidhan on whom as General Secretary fell also the lion's share of the burden of collecting the funds. Well did he perform his part of the job and at the conclusion of the session, rich but well-deserved tributes were paid to him by the Chairman of the Reception Committee, J. M. Sen Gupta. Bidhan himself was satisfied with what he had been able to do and he was "happy" that the Congress session had been managed "fairly successfully".

One of the natural consequences of Bidhan's appointment as General Secretary of the Reception Committee of the Congress was his election also as a member of the All-India

### AS A CONGRESS LEADER

Congress Committee in 1928. He was naturally re-elected in 1929 also. But though thus coming closer to the Congress he maintained a spirit of detachment. He was prepared to give, and in fact, gave his services whenever these were demanded for some specific purposes. But he habitually shunned the lime-light and never hankered after office. In the Bengal Congress groupism was rampant in those days. Congressmen were divided as already stated, broadly into no-changers and pro-changers. But each group in its turn was sub-divided into sub-groups, each of which had the ambition "to capture" the Congress. Rivalry among them was intense and no election could take place without its declared results being challenged by the defeated group or groups before the All-India Congress Committee. Bidhan, however, kept himself strictly aloof from the current rivalry and bickerings and if at all he could be persuaded to take some interest in the dispute he would do so with a view to resolving the dispute. His role as a peace-maker became quite pronounced at the Lahore session of the Congress in December 1929.

The election of Bengal's quota of members of the All-India Congress Committee had been challenged and the then President of the Congress, Pandit Motilal Nehru, on the advice of the Working Committee had ruled that the old set of members and not the new set, should participate in the A.I.C.C. meetings in Lahore. But when the All-India Congress Committee met on December 27, 1929, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose challenged the President's ruling in the form of a motion of adjournment of the House on the ground that "the elected members of the A.I.C.C. from Bengal were not allowed to take part in that meeting." This was followed by a certain amount of disorder and a heated discussion in the course of which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, till then the General Secretary, pointed out that the matter could be taken up for discussion if an appeal against the Working Committee's decision were submitted in the proper form. The cue was taken up by Shri Satyendra Chandra Mitra who formally moved an appeal. President Motilal Nehru nevertheless disallowed

discussion of the matter relenting only to this extent that he ordered that the appeal would be discussed on the following day. At this, resentment rose high in the Bengal camp and a number of Bengal members led by Netaji walked out in protest.

Bidhan spent a busy night pleading with his Bengal friends on the one hand, and Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the other, the effect of which was visible when, the A.I.C.C. resuming as the Subjects Committee the next day, the first thing which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who had been installed as President the day before, did was to rule that "in view of the special circumstances of the case" the appeal preferred by Shri S. C. Mitra be taken into consideration. The Subjects Committee accordingly reconverted itself into the A.I.C.C. Immediately thereafter Bidhan stood up to move that "as a matter of compromise" the appeal should not be proceeded with and in addition to the old A.I.C.C. members from Bengal present, 6 members of the newly elected A.I.C.C. members should be allowed to participate in the Subjects Committee, provided the total of these members did not exceed the number allotted to Bengal. This was the compromise which Bidhan had been able to persuade not only both the contending Bengal groups to accept but he also persuaded Pandit Motilal Nehru whose considered ruling it was to supersede, to approve of it. It was a breach of the constitution to give effect to such a compromise but precisely because it was a compromise, President Jawaharlal also recommended it to the House and it was eventually accepted by the A.I.C.C. as "a variation of the interlocutory order passed by the then President Pandit Motilal Nehru."

But the matter did not end there because seeds of fresh trouble had been sown by some Subhasites having issued a statement to the press which contained observations liable to be interpreted as constituting reflections on the impartiality and integrity of the then President Pandit Motilal Nehru and also a challenge to the authority of the Working Committee. Shri J. M. Sen Gupta drew the attention of

## AS A CONGRESS LEADER

the House to the statement, already published in the papers and almost said that he withdrew his consent to the compromise "in view of the attitude of the other party". Even Pandit Motilal Nehru, red in face, claimed an open enquiry and President Jawaharlal had to re-open the matter.

But again it was Bidhan who pacified the situation. His discerning eyes saw how the mischief had been done and he was farsighted enough to realise what effect a censure by the A.I.C.C. would have on the political career of Subhas Chandra Bose. The night that followed was again utilised by him in full and the next day when the matter was taken up afresh Subhas was not only made to explain that the statement had been issued to a News Agency soon after the walkout from the Committee and could not be withdrawn though attempt had been made late at night but was also made to say that "there certainly had been misunderstandings and he had been under a misapprehension regarding several matters."

That was the first time when Bidhan played an active part at the A.I.C.C. meeting and he made a deep impression on the leaders with his sobriety, tactfulness and freedom from party bias.

The Lahore Congress session was historic. At Calcutta the Congress had given an ultimatum to the British Government though it had been couched in the characteristically Gandhian language of humility. There the Congress, after welcoming the Constitution based on Dominion Status which the Nehru Committee had recommended and demanding its acceptance by the British Government had stated that "the Congress shall not be bound by the Constitution if it is not accepted on or before the 31st December, 1930" and in that case "will revive non-violent Non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and every aid to Government." A spate of repression, however, had followed the spirit of which had been best illustrated by the insensate and outrageous arrest of Gandhiji in Calcutta under the Calcutta Police Act in March 1929.

followed by his trial and conviction for participation in a bonfire of foreign cloth held in a public park for the purpose of demonstration. The political reply to the Calcutta demand had come much later, on October 31, 1929 in the form of a statement by the Viceroy Lord Irwin in which he had (1) offered on behalf of His Majesty's Government that prior to the formulation of the legislative proposals based on the recommendations of the Simon Commission, there might be held in London a conference in which "His Majesty's Government should meet representatives both of British India and of the States for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals" and (2) declared with a view to settling at rest doubts expressed in India as to the real import of the British Government's declaration of August 1917 that in the British Government's judgment it was "implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status". This clearly had fallen far short of the demand made in Calcutta. Even then Gandhiji had met the Viceroy on December 23, 1929 and sought an assurance that "the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status". Such an assurance the Viceroy had declined to give and the Congress session at Lahore had to start not on the assumption but on the fact that the hand of friendship offered by the Congress at Calcutta had been refused by the British Government.

And the Lahore Congress under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru replied manfully to the insulting rejection of the hand proffered in friendship. The Resolution which it passed on the motion of Gandhiji contained an unequivocal rejection of the proposal to hold a Round Table Conference, declared in pursuance of the Resolution passed at its session at Calcutta that the word "Swaraj" in Article 1 of the Congress Constitution shall mean complete independence and having authorised the A.I.C.C. to launch upon

## AS A CONGRESS LEADER

a programme of Civil Disobedience "whenever it deems fit", called upon Congressmen to abstain from participating, directly or indirectly in future elections and "directed the present Congress members of the Legislature and Committees to resign their seats" as a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for Independence.

The largest number for any province of Congress members of the Legislature, 34, resigned their seats in the Council in obedience to the Congress mandate within a few weeks of the adoption of the Resolution at Lahore and Bidhan was one of those who resigned without the slightest demur.

Events thereafter moved with kaleidoscopic rapidity. Gandhiji as was his wont, prayed again to the Viceroy on bended knees but he got stone for bread. Even at Lahore, the Working Committee had fixed the following 26th of January for India-wide celebration as Purna Swarajya Day and a Pledge was prescribed for the people to take during the celebration solemnly undertaking to prepare for civil disobedience. The Day was celebrated with unprecedented enthusiasm all over the country. At its second meeting held on February 14, 15 and 16 at Sabarmati in Ahmedabad the Committee welcomed the proposal of Gandhiji to start civil disobedience and authorised him and those working with him who believed in non-violence as an article of faith to start civil disobedience as and when they desired. But having given the initiative exclusively to Gandhiji, the Committee also called upon "all Congressmen" to extend to the civil resisters their full co-operation "when the campaign was actually in action". The A.I.C.C. meeting in Ahmedabad on the 21st March endorsed the Working Committee's Resolution and authorised the Provincial Congress Committees to organise and undertake such civil disobedience as to them might seem proper. It was at this meeting that the Congress President was given the power to nominate his successor and successors of the members of the Working Committee in the event of their arrest and it was under this authorisation that

Bidhan later was appointed a member of the Working Committee.

The historic Dandi March of the Mahatma with 75 Ashramites as his companions had been started on March 12, 1930. The Government had taken no action against the pilgrims and the full reports of even the minutest details of the journey for nearly three weeks appeared in the nationalist newspapers which had a galvanising effect on the public. When therefore at the end of his journey he solemnly committed on the 6th April, the beginning of the National Week, a technical breach of the Salt Law and, in addition, issued a statement intimating that any one who would take the risk of prosecution could manufacture salt whenever he wished and wherever it was convenient to him, it was the signal for mass civil disobedience. On the 4th May, Gandhiji was arrested under an old Preventive Detention Act. But even before that the whole country had been in a state of conflagration. The arrest further fanned the flames.

The movement in Bengal, always in the forefront of revolution, was more vigorous in its total impact than in any other province and yet differed in certain respects from the rather uniform pattern of the movement in the rest of India. Here it was one more stream—broad and powerful—added to the several which had been flowing from before. Even the Civil Disobedience movement in Bengal drawing its inspiration from the Congress assumed diverse forms according to the predilections of the groups of Congressmen directly involved in its organisation and direction.

Repression had been going on in Bengal throughout 1929. It increased in both intensity and extensity after the Lahore Congress with the result that many leading Congressmen found themselves in jail even before Gandhiji started his historic Dandi March. Netaji himself, for example, with such able and influential lieutenants as Kiron Sankar Roy and Dr. J. M. Das Gupta were convicted and sent to prison 3 days before the All-India celebration of the first Indepen-

AS A CONGRESS LEADER .

dence Day. J. M. Sen Gupta was arrested on a warrant issued from Rangoon and removed from Calcutta though for a short period, in the second week of March. Arrests of other leading Congressmen followed in quick succession after the commencement of the Dandi March. J. M. Sen Gupta who had been released from Rangoon on the expiry of his short sentence, was rearrested in Calcutta and sentenced to 6 months' R.I. in the second week of April. Some other notable persons who were quickly picked up one after another, were Dr. Suresh Chandra Banerjee, Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, Sri Satis Chandra Das Gupta, Sri Purna Chandra Das and Srimati Urmila Devi, to mention but a few, the result of which was that it became difficult for the Congress High Command to find a trustworthy Congressman to be put in charge of the official Congress movement in Bengal.

It was under such circumstances that the choice fell on Bidhan, for in addition to being an outstanding Congressman he also enjoyed the confidence of the Congress leadership to this extent that he would not allow anything to be done in the name of the Congress which would go against the spirit of the Congress policy. He was unofficially put in charge immediately after the arrest of J. M. Sen Gupta and he conducted the movement with such quiet efficiency that in April the first of the illustrious series of substitute Congress Presidents, Pandit Motilal Nehru, nominated him to be a member of the Working Committee.

Loyally and fearlessly, though without the slightest ostentation, Bidhan served the Congress and the nation in rebellion as an active member of the Working Committee from April to August though for the greater part of this period the Committee remained an unlawful assembly. The members of the Committee functioned literally with one foot in the jail and its personnel frequently changed. Pandit Motilal, for example, was arrested in June and was succeeded by V. J. Patel. The latter on his arrest soon after was succeeded by Moulana Abul Kalam Azad. He

DR. B. C. ROY

too had a short, though spectacular, term and was succeeded on his arrest by Dr. M. A. Ansari. It is worth mentioning that during Bidhan's membership of the Working Committee the Committee passed several significant resolutions having profound bearing on the present and the future of India. In May at Allahabad, for example, it recorded its strong condemnation of the Press Ordinance as "an outrage on civilisation" and its appreciation of the action of those newspapers who had refused "to submit to the lawless provisions of that Ordinance". It also approved of and authorised the inauguration of a no-tax campaign. In June the Committee by a Resolution impressed upon Indians employed in the military and police forces of the Government that "it is as much their duty as that of other Indians to strive for the freedom of their country" and also that "it is no part of their duty to commit cruel assaults on unarmed and unresisting people". It was during this period that the Working Committee caused an enquiry to be made by a Special Committee appointed by the Acting President into what had appeared to have been the mass murder of Red Shirt Satyagrahis in Peshawar in April and also endorsed the Special Committee's finding, among others, that in the situation that had arisen in Peshawar firing by the armoured cars "was wholly unjustifiable."

The Resolution on the Peshawar Enquiry Committee's Report was passed by the Working Committee, at its meeting held in Delhi on August 27, 1930.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ARREST AND JAIL LIFE

#### THE DEATH OF MOTILAL NEHRU

The Independence Resolution was passed in the Lahore Congress in 1930 over which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided. Bidhan came away from Lahore even before the session was over, and he had a vague realisation that something serious was being attempted by the Congress. At Lahore, the Congress resolved that 26th January was to be the Day of Declaration of Independence for India. Perhaps they were tempted to do so on the analogy of the American Declaration by Abraham Lincoln.

It was decided that every Province should celebrate the day and take the consequences of Government intervention. In Calcutta, Bidhan was called upon to hoist the National Flag on the premises of the Provincial Congress Committee building. "Why I was called, I do not know" said Bidhan recalling those days to memory. "I did not then consider myself to be closely linked to the Congress fraternity, and I did not belong to any of the Congress groups. I took part in the Flag hoisting ceremony though I did not wholeheartedly endorse at that time the Congress programme. Nevertheless, I felt it was a token of appreciation by my Congress friends of my work as General Secretary of the Congress a year before."

Having taken part in the Declaration of Independence, Bidhan let himself open to the consequences that were to follow. For nearly six months the responsibility of conducting the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bengal fell on his shoulders and he carried the whole burden. Hundreds and thousands of men and women, young and old, cheerfully joined the movement and willingly suffered incarceration and other punishments. Having entered the arena of fight,

Bidhan went ahead with that determination that characterised all his efforts in life—the will to victory.

As he himself confessed, "a new orientation of the apparently innocent programme of Gandhiji in the 'March to Dandi' to prepare salt of sea water became clear to me. I witnessed scores of young men and women taking physical chastisement and corporal punishments without flinching or complaints. Thus was exhibited the triumph of the principles of non-violence on a mass scale. I began to realise the significance of Gandhiji's statement before a group of students a few months prior to this. Gandhiji said, 'People in the world call me a mad man because I preach and try to practise non-violence in my life's activities. The world today only understands violence, but violence used to suppress violence increases the problems rather than solving them. The world would soon get tired of violence. The people will then realise the value of my doctrine'".

Bidhan carried on the responsibility of guiding the movement in Bengal. In August 1930, he was a member of the Working Committee and Maulana Azad, then in Meerut Jail, was the President of the Congress. Bidhan was summoned from Calcutta to see Pandit Motilal Nehru in Naini Jail where he had been reported to have coughed up blood. Dr. Ansari also came to Allahabad and from there he went with Dr. Roy to the jail to see the patient. It happened to be a Saturday. Dr. Ansari and Dr. Roy returned from jail after examining Motilal and wrote out a memorandum about his health and sent it to the U.P. Government in Lucknow. Bidhan remained at Allahabad for the reply from Government, while Ansari returned to Delhi on the same day. On Sunday Bidhan got news from Lucknow that the Government doctors would examine Pandit Motilal on the following day. So he decided to stay in Allahabad to meet the Government representatives.

In the meantime a meeting of the Working Committee was called in Dr. Ansari's house in Delhi on Tuesday. Ansari on his return to Delhi from Allahabad phoned

## ARREST AND JAIL LIFE

Bidhan on Sunday morning to say that the proposed meeting of the Working Committee was not of very great importance and as such he could go back to Calcutta as soon as his task in Allahabad was over. Dr. Roy therefore decided that he would return to Calcutta on Monday evening, but on Monday morning there appeared in the newspapers a notification declaring the Working Committee illegal. On seeing this, Bidhan changed his programme and decided to go to Delhi instead. He left for Delhi on Monday by the day train from Allahabad. On Tuesday, the 26th August 1930, Bidhan was arrested at Delhi along with the Congress President Dr. Ansari, Pandit Malaviya, Vithalbhai Patel, Dipnarayan Singh and others. The trial commenced at 11 A.M. on August 28. The following contemporary report of the trial in the jail will be read with interest:

“The leaders were unconcerned with what was happening and were all along reading books. At 12 o'clock the Magistrate asked them if they had anything to say but they refused to participate. While the leaders were having their repast in the tents pitched in the European ward of the gaol, the Magistrate accompanied by Pressmen, went over there and said: ‘I am sorry, gentlemen, to sentence you to six months' S.I. in 'A' class.’” In the Delhi Jail Bidhan stayed for 10 days. ‘We enjoyed our stay inside the jail as if we were taking part in a joyous adventure’, reveals Dr. Roy, ‘where were the rigours of jail life? Or did the British masters treat political prisoners on a different basis?’

After 10 days, Bidhan and Dipnarayan Singh were taken in car from the jail. The car was driven by the Superintendent of Police and he took them to the railway station by a round-about way and lodged them in a first class compartment. Barring the fact that they were isolated from other passengers they did not feel any awkwardness of prisoners in transit. Dipnarayan Singh was made to detrain at Hazaribagh Road Station and was taken to the Hazaribagh Central Jail. When the train reached Burdwan,

**DR. B. C. ROY**

Bidhan was agreeably surprised to see his brother on the platform. He was permitted by the Police Officer on duty to come into his compartment. "On reaching Howrah Station," Bidhan again reveals, "I was overrun with and amazed at the welcome my friends gave me as if I have done something wonderful. This was the first time when I received presents of bouquets and garlands from the public. I wondered why. I had no realisation of having done anything extraordinary, anything more than another person in the same situation would have done."

From the station Bidhan was taken to the Central Jail at Alipore. He had to pass through a narrow opening of the first gate and to his sensitive mind he felt for the first time that he was being humiliated having had to bend his body to enter. And Bidhan's great philosophy is not to bend! He was made to go through the same opening as other inmates of the jail. After having passed through the first gate he had to halt until certain formalities were gone through. Then passing another small opening of the inner gate he was taken to his quarters. Amongst others lodged in the Alipore Jail he met Kiron Shankar Roy, his old friend and colleague. In fact Kiron Shankar had sent a note to Bidhan a few weeks earlier saying that they who were inside the jail had been waiting in expectation of his joining them. "I thought then," says Dr. Roy, "that the idea was ridiculous". But there in the jail he was placed in one of the cells on the same floor where in four other cells were housed J. M. Sen Gupta, Subhas Chandra Bose, Kiron Shankar Roy and Professor Nripendra Nath Banerjee. Soon after his admission into the Alipore prison he was asked by Major Patney, the Superintendent, to take charge of the 120-bedded hospital inside the jail. As it was a diversion for him and a work which was interesting, he agreed to take full charge of the hospital during the period of his incarceration. There were then 2,500 convicts half of whom were political prisoners.

As usual with him Bidhan put his heart and soul into

## ARREST AND JAIL LIFE

the work entrusted to him in the jail hospital. Soon he succeeded in securing the confidence of all—officers, staff and the jail inmates. Besides his daily work in the hospital which occupied two or three hours of his time, he took to the study of the German language with the help of Dr. Kanai Ganguli, who was also a fellow political prisoner. Bidhan made rapid progress in his German studies, and within a short time he could understand the written script and he was also able to compose sentences in German and translate German into English.

In the jail he started his day at about 5 A.M., when he and some of his friends took a walk around the little yard attached to the house. They went round and round and covered almost a mile. Then after morning tea and refreshment he sat to work. His life in jail was a disciplined one. As he voluntarily submitted to his conviction, he did not feel it proper to get irritated in jail.

While in prison, Bidhan realised that not less than 80 per cent. of the jail population were not temperamentally criminal. "These people," he thought, "could be salvaged by proper social welfare measures". He further learnt that the jail rules then were prescribed without a human approach. They indicated that their framers had decided to regard a convicted person as a mechanically depraved unit of society who should be governed like any automaton on rigid disciplinary methods. There was not much evidence to show that the jail authorities understood or attempted to understand the nature and the minds of the prisoners. A restriction was enforced by penal measures in every direction. "The whole show," says Dr. Roy, "reminded me more of a menagerie than of a place which was the abode of human beings".

Bidhan was given a differential consideration from all others as he happened to look after the sick people in the jail. Moreover, he gave all aids to the authorities in maintaining some measure of orderliness. Over and above, the special consideration was due to his position outside the

DR. B. C. ROY

jail as a leader in the medical profession, to which belonged Major Patney, the Superintendent of the Jail. As such, in Bidhan's case the rigours of jail life were mitigated by the authorities permitting him to use his own bed and clothing and not locking him up at dusk. In addition, he enjoyed other facilities to see friends and visitors. The Superintendent had been satisfied with his work in the hospital.

At that time there was a big board in the jail hospital on which was recorded the percentage of deaths which occurred there for six months. During the period when Dr. Roy was in charge of the hospital there were many cases of Pneumonia and Typhoid which he cured with medicines he was instrumental in bringing into the jail. Ordinarily the jail authorities did not supply these medicines, but Bidhan was able to arrange for their supply by his own efforts. It was found out in January 1931 that death rate within the period of about six months when Dr. Roy was in charge of the hospital was six or seven less than in the previous records. According to the Jail Code a convict who saves another convict's life gets full remission for such an act. Therefore the Superintendent argued that since Dr. Roy had saved the lives of so many jail inhabitants he should get the maximum remission that may be permitted to any person, who is convicted for six months. The Government readily accepted the suggestion and allowed Dr. Roy six weeks' remission of his sentence in course of the six months period. Recalling his jail life Dr. Roy once said:

"I had an enforced rest for five months. I was given many privileges denied to an ordinary convict. I was respected by one and all. I had my hours in jail fully employed and yet can I truthfully say that I liked the incarceration? In my mind I had no such feeling that I was making some sacrifice for the motherland or that I was fulfilling the directions of the leaders of the Congress. I went to prison merely owing to a chain of circumstances, and not because I had planned for it. I

## ARREST AND JAIL LIFE

do not hesitate to declare that life in prison, however comfortable it may have been made for me implies all the restrictions on the prisoner's freedom which everyone of us highly cherishes. The blank walls of the cell, 12 ft. high with an iron gate on one side, had a high pitched window that I was privileged to see, aroused me at night. The 6 ft. verandah in front allowed a certain amount of freedom, but the whole block was surrounded by high walls and the gate to the back block was kept locked up during the day and night. It was Gandhiji who taught Indians to appreciate the dignity of jail life. Incarceration inside a prison house was not necessarily dis honourable or something to abhor or to be ashamed of, if the purpose be to secure freedom for the masses from the chains of a foreign rule."

Thus in the middle of January 1931 when Bidhan had hardly finished five months of his jail life, orders were issued for his release. It was a great surprise to him, for, he wondered what led the Government to give him this exemption. Only later on he learnt that the recommendation was made by the Superintendent.

Soon after his release from jail Dr. Roy was summoned to the bed side of Pandit Motilal Nehru, who was seriously and dangerously ill. Bidhan left for Allahabad the day after he was released and remained with Motilal Nehru until the great leader passed away.

Dr. Ansari also came to Allahabad to the bed side of Pandit Motilal Nehru. Motilal used to say to Ansari and Bidhan that they were the 'co-trustees' of his life.

One day while at Allahabad Bidhan found Gandhiji taking only raw vegetables—no milk, no cereals. Thereupon he said that he did not like the diet as Gandhiji was already underweight and suggested to him to take milk and cereals. Gandhiji was then 99 lbs. in weight. He smilingly asked Bidhan what he thought to be the safety margin of his weight. Dr. Roy told him that it should be 106 lbs. considering his age and height. Gandhiji said challengingly

“Will you give me ten days to get the weight you want on this my diet? If I do not succeed I will obey your instructions regarding diet”.

“It may appear to be a miracle, which I cannot explain on the basis of physiological principles”, confesses Dr. Roy, “but the fact remained that Gandhiji gained the desired weight on the same diet that he was taking and within the stipulated period. Such wonders can be achieved only by those who have the body completely under the control of the mind.”

Towards the end of January it was decided to take Pandit Motilal Nehru to Lucknow for X-ray treatment. The question was whether Gandhiji would also go with them. Bidhan asked him for his views and Gandhiji said at once unhesitatingly, “If you, Dr. Bidhan, feel that my presence in Lucknow will help in your treatment, I will obey your instructions. You are part of my medicine chest.” Gandhiji went with them to Lucknow. “It was fortunate”, says Dr. Roy, “that Gandhiji did so because he was a tower of strength in my difficult task of attending on such a great personality”.

Pandit Motilal died early morning on the 29th January, the day after their arrival in Lucknow, the Deep X-ray treatment having been of no avail. Next the problem was to take the dead body to Allahabad. Though sorrow-stricken at the death of Pandit Motilal who was the dearest and nearest to the heart of Bidhan, he had to do some quick thinking on the arrangements to be made for carrying the dead body to Allahabad. Bidhan suggested a coffin to be made of bamboos and to cover it with the National Flag. Accordingly it was done. The coffin was taken in an open car which was driven by R. S. Pandit, son-in-law of Motilal. Gandhiji was there and seeing the coffin made on the instruction of Dr. Roy, he said, “Bidhan, you should have been an architect instead of a Doctor”.

The body was cremated on the banks of the Jumna with almost the entire people of Allahabad and neighbouring

## **ARREST AND JAIL LIFE**

areas emerged in deep sorrow. After returning from the river bank in the evening Bidhan asked Gandhiji what was in his estimation the most outstanding characteristic of Motilal Nehru. Gandhiji promptly replied "His intense love for the country, for the family and for everybody".

"I confess", said Dr. Roy, "I marvel at Gandhiji's analysis of the nature of a man, who was apparently stern and austere to all outsiders, but really very kind to his close intimates."

## CHAPTER XIX

### WITH GANDHIJI

Bidhan's recollection of the first meeting with Gandhiji was at the house of Maharaja of Cossimbazar some time in 1914 or 1915 when he had come to India from South Africa. The impression left on Bidhan's mind was that as a speaker Gandhiji was a failure, but his effectiveness lay in the sincerity and earnestness conveyed by the words he uttered. Bidhan was then in Government service working as an Assistant Surgeon in a Medical School. Naturally there was then little meeting ground between him and Gandhiji so far as political ideologies were concerned. "I understood little of political thoughts", Bidhan reveals, "nor did I take any active part in the movement that convulsed Bengal and the whole of India in the early decades of this century. I must have read from time to time about Gandhiji's statements of activities, but they did not leave any great impression in my mind. As a matter of fact I was then not a regular or interested reader of newspapers which purveyed the news of the day except perhaps of some sensational news, which gives passing enjoyment to the mind, but which has not any significance." He met Gandhiji face to face and talked with him only after the death of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. It happened dramatically.

At the time of the sudden and unexpected death of Chittaranjan Das in Darjeeling Bidhan was in Shillong. He was profoundly upset by the sad news and immediately he left Shillong and reached Calcutta three days after Chittaranjan's death and went straight to see Basanti Debi, Deshbandhu's revered wife. When he went to her house he met Gandhiji, who was sitting in the room. On seeing Bidhan, Basanti Debi burst out and said that this calamity would not have overtaken her had Dr. Roy been in

## WITH GANDHIJI

Darjeeling. Evidently Gandhiji was moved by Basanti Debi's confidence and immediately realised the affection that Dr. Roy had commanded from Chittaranjan's family. Then on being introduced they began to like each other.

After the death of Chittaranjan, Gandhiji cancelled all his engagements. He did devote himself wholeheartedly to the collection of funds for establishing a memorial to Deshbandhu. It has already been revealed that Chittaranjan had even without consulting Dr. Roy made him a trustee to the property he bequeathed for national welfare. Gandhiji asked Bidhan: "How do you propose to carry out Chittaranjan's wishes?" It was Bidhan who suggested that Chittaranjan's house might be converted into a hospital and education in nursing might be promoted there. Gandhiji agreed with Dr. Roy and immediately an appeal for funds was issued. Dr. Roy used to meet Gandhiji often and moved about with him when he went to see probable donors. Through rain and inclement weather Gandhiji would go about with hardly any clothing to cover his body. Bidhan was impressed by the self-discipline which made Gandhiji brave the weather and conquer the weakness of the flesh. "I have in my own humble way", says Dr. Roy, "tried to follow Gandhiji's footsteps in this regard as I have realised that the mind eventually controls the body provided we train ourselves for the purpose".

From 1925 onwards Bidhan became an intimate friend of Gandhiji. In 1926, one day Dr. Roy was travelling to see a patient at Raipur. He had no idea that Gandhiji was in the next compartment of the train. As Bidhan alighted at the station, he found Gandhiji was peeping out from his compartment and smilingly asked him to take charge of the contents of a huge leather box, to sell the goods contained in it and send him the money and the account. There was no inventory of the contents though prices were marked on each piece. He was amazed at the confidence with which he left the goods worth Rs. 3,000/- or Rs. 4,000/-.

Later in 1928, when Bidhan was the General Secretary of

'the Congress Session going to be held in Calcutta that year, he needed the guidance of Gandhiji. At that time Bidhan was unaware of the political groupings in Bengal and the currents of party politics and so on. He accepted the General Secretaryship because of a feeling that he should not refuse responsibility although at that time he had very little knowledge of current Congress politics specially of the internal frictions and factions. So Bidhan wrote to Gandhiji asking him not to remain aloof as he was then doing, but to take up the task of directing the Congress movement again and particularly to come to Calcutta early enough to advise and guide him on the momentous task that he had undertaken. Gandhiji sent a characteristic reply: "I am vain enough to think that I will still lead the country to freedom, but the time for me to take an active part is not apt. *Asatoma Sadgamaya*, which means—Oh God, lead me from untruth to truth". But Gandhiji did not come.

It was in 1931 that Bidhan had the occasion to come closer to Gandhiji when in January Pandit Motilal Nehru was on his death bed. As already said, Bidhan left for Allahabad the day after his release. Even while in jail Bidhan had learnt of Motilal Nehru's illness. In January 1931, Gandhiji and other leaders of the Congress were also released. They came to Allahabad to be at the bed side of suffering Motilal.

When Bidhan met Gandhiji at Allahabad he asked him why he had accepted the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Gandhiji narrated the story. He said that he went alone to Lord Irwin's house at about 9 P.M. after the Working Committee had definitely directed that the negotiations with the Government should be broken off unless Gandhiji felt that his talks with Lord Irwin would produce a satisfactory response.

Gandhiji revealed to Bidhan that he argued with Lord Irwin from 9-30 P.M. to 3 A.M. Then suddenly Lord Irwin got up and said: "Mr. Gandhi, don't you see that I am a Christian and that I would not tell you an untruth. Why this suspicion?" Gandhiji told Bidhan that there was in Lord Irwin's eyes

## WITH GANDHIJI

something which showed that he was speaking the truth and his words were sincere. After this Gandhiji confessed to Bidhan: "I succumbed not to Lord Irwin, but to the honesty in him; I went against the directive of the Working Committee."

In between Bidhan's release from jail and Gandhiji's Poona fast, some interesting letters passed between them. It began with the Anti-untouchability Board of which Shri G. D. Birla was the All-India President. He had nominated Dr. B. C. Roy as the President of the Bengal Board, but it seems that Shri Satish Das Gupta and Dr. Suresh Banerjee did not like to have Bidhan as the President. The correspondence that passed between Gandhiji and Dr. Roy as well as Shri G. D. Birla would be interesting.

Yeravada Central Prison,  
*7th December, 1932.*

Dear Dr. Bidhan,

I have had a long chat with Sjt. Ghanshyamdas Birla, as also Satish Baboo regarding the Anti-Untouchability Board for Bengal. I have also several letters from Bengal complaining about the formation of the Board. Before it was formed Ghanshyamdas had told me that he was going to ask you to form the Board, and without giving any thought to the suggestion I at once endorsed it. But I see that the idea has not found favour in Bengal, especially so far as Satish Baboo and Dr. Suresh are concerned. They think that the Board is bound to have a party colour about it. I do not know how far this fear is justified, but I do know this, that the work of Anti-Untouchability should not become a party affair in any way whatsoever. We want all who desire the reform to associate themselves freely and whole-heartedly with any organisation that may be formed. I would therefore suggest that you should call all the workers representing different groups and parties and place yourself at their

DR. B. C. ROY

disposal and let them then choose whomsoever they like as President, offering to give your whole-hearted co-operation to the President and Board of their choice. I know that this requires self-abnegation. If I know you well, I know that this is not beyond you. Of course if you feel that there is nothing in the complaints made and that you will be able to smooth down all the difficulties and that you will be able to bring all the parties together, I have nothing to say. In making the suggestions that I have made I have assumed the impossibility of securing the association of all parties with the Board as it is constituted at present. I have now placed the whole thing before you. You will do whatever is best in the interest of the cause.

Sjt. Khaitan gave me your message about Vasanti Devi. I told him that I wanted her to work effectively and ceaselessly in the cause of Anti-Untouchability. I am not enamoured of her accepting any office in any organisation. When I was there at the time of the Deshbandhu collections, both she and I had come to the conclusion that her job was not to run any organisation, but simply to work whenever she was free and had the mind for it.

You will please tell me all about Dr. Alam.\*

Dr. Bidhan Roy,  
Wellington Street,  
Calcutta.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI.

36, Wellington Street,  
Calcutta,  
12th December, 1932.

My dear Mahatmaji,

Your letter reached me yesterday. I heard from Mr. Khaitan the details of the discussion he had with you

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\*Dr. Alam was a Congress leader.

## WITH GANDHIJI

regarding Bengal Anti-Untouchability Board. You told him that you were going to write to me. After hearing Mr. Khaitan, I was prepared for a letter from you such as you have sent me. Before I proceed further, you will allow me to mention that the position of the Presidentship of the Bengal Board was not of my seeking and I now know that Mr. Birla had, after consultation with you and with your approval, selected me as President. When the call came, I agreed, in spite of my imperfections and my other preoccupations. I do not forget also, that the whole scheme originated with you and friends who met at Poona and therefore, when these friends wanted me to do so, I accepted the responsibility. You asked me to be the President, because you were then convinced that I could do the work. Now that you do not feel so sure and want me to withdraw, I gladly do so. I am writing to Mr. Birla today offering my resignation. It is no matter of self-abnegation for me, because I have never in my life occupied any place or position for a moment when those who have it in their gift, desire that I should not continue to do so.

You have in your letter suggested that I should "call all workers representing different groups and parties" and "let them choose whomsoever they like as President". May I point out to you that under the Constitution of the League, the President of the Central Board, nominates the Presidents of the Provincial Boards, who in their turn nominate the members of the Provincial Boards. I have no power to dissolve the Board already formed in Bengal. It is not, therefore, possible for me to follow your instructions even if I desired to, but I am referring the whole matter to Mr. Birla, the President of the All-India Board for him to take such action as he chooses.

You say in your letter, "but I see that the idea has not found favour in Bengal". I feel it my duty to inform you that in Bengal, there are many parties and groups, besides those led by Sjt. Satis Das Gupta and Dr. Suresh

DR. B. C. ROY

Banerji, who are interested in untouchability work and who are doing very valuable work now. We framed the Bengal Board very carefully and as Sj. Debi Prasad Khaitan must have told you, the Board was representative of the various groups. Many of the District bodies already in existence have written to us signifying their desire to co-operate with the Board and in fact, we have had no refusal except as Sj. Khaitan told you from Messrs. Das Gupta and Banerjee though for different reasons. As you, however, seem to think that in Bengal a Board cannot function effectively unless with the co-operation of Sj. Das Gupta and Dr. Banerji, which they have refused to give, there is no option left but to dissolve the Board.

As the work of the League has already begun in Bengal, it would be difficult for us and the members of my Board to explain the position unless I get your permission to send this letter and the first paragraph of your letter to the Press. I hope you have no objection.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

---

Birla House,  
Albuquerque Road,  
New Delhi,  
*The 14th Dec., 1932.*

Dear Dr. Roy,

I am extremely distressed to read the contents of your letter. I think as a non-Bengali I should not make any comment. I felt very miserable when I heard of these party-squabbles. Let me hope after your resignation the difficulties will not be aggravated. Mr. Khaitan put the case on your behalf and I stated all the facts to Gandhiji as they were. I simply hope that you would be able to find some ways and means to end the party-



DK ROY WITH C VNDHII



**WITH GANDHIJI**

factions, although I don't believe it is such an easy task; In a way I am happy that you are out of this trouble. But that of course is more personal. I, however, hope that I will have your full support in any work which may be undertaken in Bengal.

More when we meet.

Yours sincerely,  
**G. D. BIRLA.**

**Dr. B. C. Roy,**  
**Calcutta.**

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No. 02371  
15 DEC 32

**INDIAN POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS  
DEPARTMENT**

=O RL POONA Y 15 61 DR BIDHAN ROY WEL-  
LINGTON STREET CALCUTTA=  
YOUR UNSIGNED LETTER RECD TODAY COR-  
RESPONDENCE NOT MEANT FOR PUBLICATION  
HAVE TOLD YOU DISTINCTLY IF YOU FEEL  
CONFIDENT YOU SHOULD CONTINUE WORK  
ALREADY BEGUN ACCEPT MY APOLOGY FOR  
WHAT I NOW RECOGNISE WAS UNDUE INTER-  
FERENCE & WHAT I HAD MEANT TO BE  
FRIENDLY SUGGESTION PLEASE THEREFORE  
TREAT MY LETTER AS ABSOLUTELY WITH-  
DRAWN=GANDHI=

---

DR. B. C. ROY

Yeravada Central Prison,  
15th December, 1932.

Dear Dr. Bidhan,

Your letter stuns me. I sent you a telegram immediately I read it. I had thought that we were so near each other that you could never misunderstand a friendly letter from me. But I see that I committed a grave blunder. I ought not to have written that letter. I have therefore unreservedly and unconditionally withdrawn it. That letter being withdrawn, you need not take any of the steps adumbrated in your letter. Do please, therefore, go on with the Board as if I had never written anything to you. The mental hurt that I have caused you, you will generously forget. I shall not easily forgive myself for writing that letter to you. Someone had suggested, I cannot recall who, that you might misunderstand my letter, and I foolishly said that you would never misunderstand anything I wrote to you. 'Pride goeth before destruction, and vanity before a fall'. After these amends, I hardly think you need to publish the correspondence between us. But, if, for the sake of the cause, you think it necessary to publish it, you have my permission, in so far as it may be necessary.

Please tell me how Kamala and Dr. Alam are doing, and ask Kamala\* to write to me.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI.

P.S. Since dictating the above letter, I have received your telegram of date, to which I have replied as follows:—

"Thanks your wire. By confidence I mean self-confidence. Of course you can rely upon such assistance as is within my power—Gandhi". 16/12/32

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\*Kamala—wife of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

WITH GANDHI

36, Wellington Street,  
Calcutta.

TELEGRAM FROM DR. ROY TO GANDHIJI

THANKS FOR TELEGRAM RESPECTFULLY SUBMIT DONT UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU MEAN BY MY FEELING CONFIDENT (STOP) AS EXPLAINED IN LETTER IN VIEW OF PRESENT ENTHUSIASM IN BENGAL ANY PRESIDENT AND BOARD CAN PERFORM ANTI-UNTOUCHABILITY WORK (STOP) IF HOWEVER YOU MEAN CONFIDENCE IN OBTAINING COOPERATION FROM THOSE WHO REFUSE IT WHEN OFFERED NO ONE CAN ENSURE IT (STOP) MEASURE OF SUCCESS WOULD DEPEND LARGELY ON FUNDS AND PROPER UTILISATION THEREOF (STOP) PLEASE WIRE WHETHER I AND BOARD CAN RELY ON YOUR FULL SUPPORT IF WE CONTINUE

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No. 01954  
16 DEC 32

INDIAN POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS  
DEPARTMENT

O, QE POONA Y 16 31 DR BIDHAN ROY  
36 WELLINGTON STR CALCUTTA

THANKS YOUR WIRE BY CONFIDENCE I MEAN SELF-CONFIDENCE OF COURSE YOU CAN RELY UPON SUCH ASSISTANCE AS IS WITHIN MY POWER — GANDHI

---

DR. B. C. ROY

17-12-32

BIRLA  
NEW DELHI

RECEIVED ASSURANCE OF GANDHIJI'S SUPPORT  
IN OUR WORK—THEREFORE WE WITHDRAW  
RESIGNATION AND CONTINUE

BIDHAN

---

17-12-32

MAHATMA GANDHI  
YERAVADA JAIL  
POONA

THANKS FOR ASSURANCE WITH GOD'S HELP  
WE SHALL STRIVE ON TOWARDS SUCCESS

BIDHAN

---

Yeravada Central Prison,  
*17th January, 1933.*

Dear Dr. Bidhan,

I enclose herewith a letter from Sjt. Rasik Lal Biswas. I have advised him to see you. Do please invite him to see you.

What is this agitation against the Yeravada Pact? I would like you to give me the inwardness of the opposition. How can there be any injustice in the Pact, simply because of reservation of more seats for Harijans than had been provided in the British Government decision? Are they not also Hindus? Was there not always the cry on our part that the Harijans could take as many seats as they liked, even cent per cent? This opposition, if it is popular, is likely to estrange Harijans and to justify the fears often expressed on their behalf as to the

## WITH GANDHI

attitude of caste Hindus. But you know the local situation infinitely better than I do. You will correct me if I have erred in putting the argument. I have given no public reply, because I felt that any reply from me at the present stage might increase the resentment of the Harijans. In any case, I did not want to say anything without first understanding the situation through you. Please guide me.

I hope Kamala and Dr. Alam are making steady progress.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI.

In 1933 Bidhan was called to Gandhiji's bed side while he was undergoing a fast at Parnakutir in Poona. Gandhiji was then staying at Lady Thackersey's palatial marble house. "I have seen Gandhiji", writes Bidhan, "in Sevagram with mud floors and the only furniture he possessed was a mat on which was spread a bedsheet and a plank of wood to serve as a backrest, and another as a writing board. He seemed equally at home in a palace as well as in a hut. Nothing external upset or disturbed his mind, which has a world of its own."

Gandhiji had undertaken this fast for 21 days. Bidhan attended on him from the third day, examined him and tested his blood to know whether there was any deviation from the normal reaction of tissues due to the fast and it seemed to him that none of the usual reactions to fasting appeared. As the days were on, Gandhiji began to get smaller and smaller in size. "He lay crumpled up in his bed", reveals Bidhan, "God knows what thoughts kept his mind engaged during those days. But it was clear he was summoning all his physical resources to serve the purpose he had in view and go through the fast period happy and contented."

The fast was over and Gandhiji sipped orange juice after

DR. B. C. ROY

'prayers and singing. Bidhan returned to Calcutta with the knowledge "that in some persons mind controls all physical functions."

Recalling that fast of Gandhiji, Bidhan once observed: "It is not a solitary instance of this kind. All around us we find instances when worry, anxiety or overwhelming sense of duty keep a person going for days together without food or rest. Only in such cases the overpowering emotion restrains the physical function. In the case of Gandhiji it was a deliberate resolve. He had a set purpose which had made him undertake the fast and he controlled his appetite and physical needs."

## CHAPTER XX

### JOURNALIST

This perhaps is the best place where a reference may be made to Bidhan's contribution to Indian journalism. The appearance of the *Forward* in Calcutta in 1923 on the eve of the General Elections marked the inauguration of a strikingly militant phase in Indian journalism. It was promoted by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, who also became its first Editor. It was Deshbandhu who persuaded Bidhan to take an interest in the paper. But having once taken a hand in the matter, Bidhan got inextricably mixed up in the business. After the passing away of the leader, the *Forward* and its allied publications *Bangabani* and *Atmasakti* became a sacred charge on the "Big Five." Journalism then was not an industry and the *Forward* group of papers did not care for profit. It means in plain words that those responsible for the management of the journals had to meet the deficit from their own pockets. From the very beginning Bidhan had to carry on his shoulders much of the burden of finding the finances for these papers. The burden became heavier when *Forward* had to go out of existence as a sequel to a decree against the paper, and *Liberty* was brought out to take its place. After arrest and prolonged detention of Sarat Chandra Bose, the burden fell even more heavily on Bidhan. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar shared the burden for some time and tried to put it on a business footing. It was soon realised that *Liberty* with a new name could not necessarily command the goodwill which *Forward* had built up for itself, and it was decided to go through the necessary legal formalities to purchase the goodwill of the old paper and republish it under the old familiar name. When this was done in 1934 the entire burden fell on Bidhan who formally became the Chairman of the paper with all its con-

'comitant liabilities—financial, administrative and editorial.

*Forward*, *Liberty* and *New Forward* were run in accordance with the best traditions of Indian journalism and if attempt was later made to run the papers as a business proposition there was not the slightest hesitation on the part of the management that the papers should be run without fear or favour. *Liberty* functioning on the direction of the Big Five readily suspended publication under the direction of the Congress knowing fully that such suspension would damage whatever business it had been able to build up as a new-comer. *New Forward* under the direct management of Bidhan functioned equally recklessly to champion the cause of the Congress and the revolutionary movement in Bengal. The Congress in the middle thirties had antagonised the public opinion in Bengal with its "Neither accept nor Reject" attitude to the Communal Award as modified by the Poona Pact, which was one of the most controversial issues at that time in Bengal. It was suggested that the *New Forward* not being the official Congress organ, need not be made to risk its popularity by supporting the unpopular Congress policy. But Bidhan as the Chairman of the Board of Directors strongly turned down the proposal and gave direction to the Editor and his staff to give full support to the Working Committee.

Bidhan arranged the finances of the paper when the entire burden fell on him, in a variety of ways. He made the necessary initial investment. He would personally sell shares by exercising his personal influence. He would pay from his own pocket the salaries of some members of the staff who had joined the precarious venture at his instance. He would similarly pay from his own pocket heavy bills the payment of which could not be delayed but was difficult to be met from the revenue income of the paper.

Bidhan also used to take an active interest in the editing of the paper without, however, interfering with the Editor with whom always remained the last word, so far as the editorial matter was concerned. He would write personal



DR ROY WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES  
(Left to right) Mrs Moreno and M Moreno Dr Kitju President Elpidio Quirino  
Dr Roy and the Consul General of Ncp



## JOURNALIST

letters to leaders, scholars and writers of note requesting them to contribute to the paper. He would give directions to the reporting staff to follow up matters of public interest. Almost daily he would suggest subjects to be dealt with in the editorial columns. The most interesting of all, now and then he would bashfully hand over to the Editor the draft of an article on some subject of current interest and would be happy if the same appeared in print though very much brushed up in form. Journalists who have known him directing the *New Forward* unhesitatingly and unanimously testify to his able grasp of subjects, sound judgment and interesting presentation of points of view which only trained journalists are capable of. So, Bidhan also was journalist like Gandhiji, Deshbandhu, Motilal Nehru and other distinguished figures in the public life of India.

In addition to running the *Forward* group of newspapers Bidhan took a leading part in the organisation of the *United Press of India*. It was in August, 1933, that Shri B. Sen Gupta, Calcutta Editor and one of the organisers of the *Free Press of India* had acute differences with his chief, Shri S. Sadanand, over the plan of the latter to publish a chain of newspapers in India in order to finance the news agency. Sen Gupta did not like a news agency to compete with the existing newspapers just as many Calcutta newspapers did not like a half anna paper to appear in Calcutta as their competitor. The differences were carried to the breaking point and Sen Gupta resigned from the *Free Press of India* in order to be free to organise another news agency to feed the nationalist Press. He could think of no one in Calcutta better able to help him in his venture than Dr. B. C. Roy, and he immediately approached the latter through Captain Narendra Nath Dutt, who then had been associated with Bidhan in the conduct of the *Liberty*. Bidhan was quick to grasp the significance and the possibilities of Sen Gupta's proposal and he immediately telephoned the editors and proprietors of Calcutta newspapers to meet him at a conference at his own residence.

It was at this conference that the decision was taken to bring the *United Press of India* into being signifying the united support of the Calcutta Press to the new adventure. Bidhan became the Chairman of the Board of Directors and Sen Gupta, its Managing Director and Managing Editor.

And Bidhan did not remain the ornamental figurehead. Having accepted the responsibility, he discharged it to the best of his ability and resources. He helped the Managing Director to sell shares and to enlist subscribers. He it was who framed the Articles of Association, and Leave and Provident Fund Rules of the news service. There was hardly a meeting of the U.P.I. Board which he did not attend. He also drafted most of the Resolutions of the Board at the formative stage of the U.P.I. Bidhan ungrudgingly used the personal influence to augment the resources of this organisation.

Bidhan's interest in journalism did not exhaust itself in promoting newspapers and a news agency. He had a keen realisation even at the early stage of his association with newspapers that a professional journalist like the members of any other profession ought to have a background of proper training. When therefore the Indian Journalists' Association of Calcutta mooted the proposal that the Calcutta University should introduce a course of training in journalism, Bidhan evinced keen interest in the proposal. He took up the matter seriously when he became the Vice-Chancellor of the University. It was during his stewardship of the University that the proposal took a definite shape although the actual introduction of the Diploma course in Journalism was delayed by several years for reasons not under the control of the Vice-Chancellor. He was gratefully remembered, however, when the stage of actual introduction came in 1951. He was invited by the University to inaugurate the course and in spite of his innumerable preoccupations as the Chief Minister of West Bengal he found time to go to the University to inaugurate the course. The following extract from the inspiring speech he delivered on the occasion deserves reproduction:

"Remember," he said, "this country is passing through changing conditions. Sometimes as my Prime Minister is often heard to say, the changes are dynamic in character. Things that happened yesterday do not hold good today and things which seem to be true today, may be absolutely outmoded tomorrow. Whenever any news or problem comes in, it is essential that every journalist, who desires to serve the people, and it is his duty to serve the people, should think about the thing himself. Here alone the freedom in journalism comes in. The journalist must be free to think in his own way,—it does not matter what are the political considerations or ideas, he must spread ideas, if he feels convinced that his ideal is correct ; otherwise, if he writes according to the occasion, or according to political considerations, or to increase the sale of the paper, he has missed his function. I am anxious that journalists taught in this school should understand the very fundamental proposition that I have put forward here. In order to do so it is essential that every journalist should attempt to act on liberty."

Bidhan had been a member of the Indian Journalists' Association, Calcutta, when he had been closely associated with the *Liberty* and *Forward* and when this organisation had no constitutional difficulty in admitting into its membership persons having also proprietorial interest in newspapers. Even as the Chief Minister of West Bengal he has not forgotten his former association with journalism. The Chief Minister's attitude to the Press continues to be governed by that of the former Chairman of the Board of Directors of *Forward* which faced extinction for the sake of political conviction and of the *United Press of India* which was promoted just for the purpose of ensuring supply to the Press in India of news free from Governmental influence. Bidhan as Chief Minister often deplores what he considers to be excesses indulged in by some newspapers ; he tries persuasion sometimes. But he has never used the big stick against the Press.

## CHAPTER XXI

### REVIVAL OF THE SWARAJYA PARTY

Apart from interesting himself in the constructive work for the Congress in 1932-33, there was not much scope for Bidhan to play a very prominent part in the political arena. As has already been seen Bidhan's genius was more constructive and he did not aspire for leadership of the movement. He shunned limelight despite the fact that he was regarded as one of the intellectual leaders of the Congress ; and he would not court arrest voluntarily as he felt that he could be effective to the cause outside the jail. But if arrest or detention was forced on him he would not avoid it either.

He did not take any direct responsibility of guiding Congress affairs in 1933. Yet inwardly he felt, in so far as he along with other Congress members of the Legislative Council had resigned their seats in 1930 after the passing of the 'Independence Resolution' at the Lahore Congress and had joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and conducted the same in Bengal till his arrest in August 1930, that it was his duty to assess the trend of the non-co-operation movement. Late in December 1933, Bidhan and Ansari had gone to Bombay where either of them presided over public functions. There at Bombay they discussed the future of the political programme of the country. Both Ansari and Bidhan were of the opinion that the tempo of the movement was waning. So they came to the conclusion that something else should be done to recoup the drooping interest of the people in the Civil Disobedience Movement. They decided to call a conference of the prominent members of the Congress in Delhi in March 1934, provided, of course, Gandhiji was prepared to bless the suggestion.

With that decision Bidhan returned to Calcutta in the



Dr. Roy, Marshal Tito and Pandit Nehru at Calcutta  
Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon is standing behind them



## REVIVAL OF THE SWARAJYA PARTY

middle of December. On the 30th of the month he met with a car accident in which he broke his left leg, which had to be put in plaster. He was confined to bed for about 10 weeks. Gandhiji was one of the first who made an anxious enquiry about the accident on hearing about it. While in bed, unable to move about, Bidhan was informed by Dr. Ansari and Mrs. Naidu that Gandhiji was not in favour of holding a conference as they suggested as it would inevitably reopen the question whether the programme of Civil Disobedience Movement decided by the A.I.C.C. in October 1933 was to be continued or not. Although he was confined to bed, Bidhan continued to harbour a hope of a Conference in Delhi as was previously decided by himself and Dr. Ansari. The best way he thought was to meet Gandhiji at Patna where he was to come in connection with the Bihar earthquake. So he went to Patna on the 16th March, still in splints as his doctors would not take them off. He was even warned that it was a rash thing to undertake the journey, but Bidhan had decided to see Gandhiji and talk to him personally regarding what he felt about the movement. On the 17th morning he arrived in Patna and immediately met Gandhiji, who agreed to have an hour's discussion with him. So they met at 4 P.M. and Bidhan started arguing with Gandhiji the pros and cons of the proposed conference. Bidhan admitted the value and utility of the powerful weapon called the Civil Disobedience Movement in removing the cancer from the body politic. Nevertheless he said: "A surgeon uses a sharp knife to remove quickly and with one sweep a dangerous festering sore in the body, but if the weapon became blunt or its sharp ends became dull, the weapon instead of removing the cancer only irritated it. The Civil Disobedience Movement was such a weapon, but its utility was affected as the edge had become blunt as was evidenced by the slowing down of the movement amongst the masses".

Continuing Bidhan argued that as a good General during

war time would sometimes halt the march forward of his army, and even retreat in order to rearrange his forces and resharpen the weapons, the Congress General shpuld do likewise. This argument seemed to impress Gandhiji, and then and there he approved of the earlier suggestion of Bidhan and Ansari to call a conference and to report to him the results of their deliberations.

So the conference met in Delhi on the 30th March and continued up to the 3rd April, 1934. With it goes an interesting story.

Ansari, Bidhan and others sat till 1 o'clock wondering what programme should be adopted by the Congress. Lord Willingdon had then been contemplating to have his dual programme of repression and reform. Late in the night Bidhan and Ansari had news from a journalist, who happened to be at that time in the good books of the Government that the Viceroy was thinking of holding elections. Lord Willingdon had consulted the Governors of the Provinces, all of whom, it seemed, had assured him that the Congress had little or no chance in the elections. Governor Sir John Anderson of Bengal was perhaps the only one, who doubted the results of the elections as he felt that anything might happen.

Thereupon Bidhan and Ansari thought that the best course for the Congress was to contest the elections and to thwart Lord Willingdon's secret plan of outmanocuvring the Congress. Accordingly they suggested that the best thing to be done was to withdraw the Civil Disobedience Movement and to revive the Swarajya Party to fight the elections. After that Ansari, Bhulabhai Desai and Bidhan met Gandhiji at Patna on the 5th April and reported to him the decisions arrived at in the conference:

- (1) To revive the suspended Swarajya Party.
- (2) To call upon those Congfessmen who did not or could not take an active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement and yet wanted to carry on the fight inside the Legislature to contest the ensuing

## REVIVAL OF THE SWARAJYA PARTY

Central Assembly elections on the issue of proposed “repression and reforms” adumbrated by the British Government.

(3) To request the Congress to permit the Swarajya Party to be so revived without in any way affecting its own declared programme of Civil Disobedience.

To their utter surprise Gandhiji after listening to them declared that he had decided to withdraw the Civil Disobedience Movement for a while. He said: “I still have the conviction that the Civil Disobedience Movement was the only weapon by which we could achieve independence. But as I am an honest man and depend on my convictions, I admit that Dr. Ansari and Dr. Bidhan are people with honest convictions and they desired a change in our programme. I will, therefore, withdraw the Civil Disobedience Movement so that the Council Entry Programme be given a chance. After six months it is possible that I would accept their programme or they will accept mine”.

Recalling this sudden decision of Gandhiji to accept the suggestions of the conference, Bidhan says: “Such an approach to an important national problem could only be taken by a self-controlled great leader like Gandhiji”. The decision was that after six months the Congress might review the whole scheme and take the next step.

Later they met at Ranchi where Gandhiji was aiding the formation of the Swarajya Party. There Bidhan asked the Working Committee whether they were willing to contest the elections. In reply it was said that the Congress could neither accept nor reject it normally. Gandhiji argued for hours at Ranchi and then decided to put the matter before the A.I.C.C. In July 1934 at a meeting of the A.I.C.C. it was decided to suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement and accept the Council Entry Programme of Ansari and Bidhan on whom had fallen the mantle of Pandit Motilal Nehru and Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das.

' But instead of permitting the Swarajya Party to conduct the ensuing Central Assembly elections to be held in October that year, the A.I.C.C. decided to put up Congress candidates. For this purpose an Election Committee was formed with Dr. Ansari as President and Dr. B. C. Roy and Mr. Bhulabhai Desai as the Secretaries. It was proposed to put Pandit Malaviya as the Vice-President to which Bidhan strongly objected. "My objection", says Dr. Roy, "lay in the fact that Pandit Malaviya had very definite and contrary views on the communal formula of the Congress and as such he could not be depended upon when fights in the Legislature would begin". Moreover, it was known that Dr. Ansari would be leaving for Europe for treatment soon after the A.I.C.C. met and Pandit Malaviya would then be the virtual President. Any hesitating move on the part of the acting President during the election campaign would weaken the cause. Further, Bidhan feared that the Communal Award formula drawn up by Gandhiji, which was being placed before the electorates, as the considered view of the Congress on the Communal Award scheme of the British Government, might not be acceptable to many prominent politicians. Over and above that, Pandit Malaviya had expressed grave doubts about the soundness of the formula. So Bidhan felt that at any odd moment during the elections Malaviya might leave the Congress on this issue. Then it might be very difficult for the Congress during an election campaign to retrieve its position if there was such a major defection. "Hence arose my grave objection to make Pandit Malaviya, the Vice-President of the Election Board of the Congress, which was to run the election," confesses Bidhan.

About a month afterwards when nominations of candidates all over India had been completed and the scene was set for vigorous election campaign, Pandit Malaviya announced the formation of the Congress Nationalist Party with himself as its President, which opposed the Communal Award formula accepted by the Congress. At that time



This is what Gandhip wrote on his Silence Day  
when Bidhan informed him about Pandit Malaviya's  
announcement of the formation of the Congress  
Nationalist Party (Refer Pp. 184-85)

## REVIVAL OF THE SWARAJYA PARTY

Bidhan was in Bombay. Immediately he went to Gandhiji's house on a Monday morning following the announcement. It was a "silence day" for Gandhiji. Bidhan told him how his presentiment about Malaviya had come out true. He further asked Gandhiji what they should do next, whether they should continue their election programme in view of the serious step taken by Malaviya in opposition to the Congress. Gandhiji wrote down the answer on a piece of paper: "The Congress is too big an organisation to be the plaything of any individual however big he might be. We must continue our election programme in spite of all odds".

"Here was a General", says Dr. Roy, "deciding an issue of grave moment without hesitation, without wavering even when odds appeared to be against us". Malaviya resigned from the Board and his party contested the election.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BENGAL CONGRESS

In October 1934 the presidential election of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee took place and without his knowledge Bidhan's name was put in as a rival candidate to Shri Subhas Chandra Bose. Dr. Roy was neither present at the meeting nor was he aware that his name was proposed, but he was elected as against Shri Subhas Chandra Bose. Thus he became the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and remained as such for about four months. In December of that year he went outside Calcutta on a professional call and it made him realise that he would not be able to continue to be the President of the Congress and at the same time get on with his profession as both required his full energy, enthusiasm and time. And Bidhan's motto, as has already been seen, is to do his best in any work that he undertook. When he found that he could not devote himself fully to the affairs of the Provincial Congress he decided to resign from the Presidentship. In fact he said in a public statement at that time that in his view profession and politics were equally hard task-masters and one could not serve both efficiently at the same time. It must be remembered here that Bidhan had never in his political career hankered after office or desired any position or power in the party.

During the election for the Central Assembly in 1934 Bidhan approached Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, who was then under detention, and suggested to him that he should stand as a Congress candidate, but Sarat Babu preferred to join Pandit Malaviya's Congress Nationalist Party along with many others from Bengal. As a matter of fact the elections to the Central Assembly from Bengal were a failure so far

## BENGAL CONGRESS

as the Congress was concerned. Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, although under detention, was elected to the Assembly.

Sarat Babu was released in the beginning of 1935 and as soon as he came out of jail the "Big Five" met together and discussed their future programme of work. They found that there was a cleavage of opinion between Shri Sarat Chandra Bose on the one hand and the rest of the group on the other on various points. So no united programme could be put forward. It was the time of factions and groups in Bengal politics and naturally Bidhan tried to keep himself aloof from the squabbles of party politicians.

Throughout the year 1935 and early in 1936 the difference of opinion amongst Congressmen in Bengal continued. They were practically divided into several groups and it was well-nigh impossible to bring them together to accept any common programme. Thus differences became more outspoken in 1936 at the time of the Provincial elections for the Legislature. A Committee was formed consisting of four members from the two opposing groups of the Congress for the nomination of the candidates for the election. Bidhan was elected the Chairman of the Committee. There was unanimity in the selection of all the 200 and odd candidates. But in the case of four candidates there was sharp difference of opinion. The two groups voted for their respective candidates and Bidhan had to exercise his casting vote in all the cases. Shri Sarat Chandra Bose was not satisfied with this position and he appealed to the Central Parliamentary Board which decided that the cases of these four candidates should be placed before the general meeting of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee for their final verdict. Accordingly the Committee met and upheld the selections of the candidates for whom Bidhan had given his casting votes. Again Shri Sarat Chandra Bose was dissatisfied with this finding of the general body of the B.P.C.C. On this also he appealed to the Working Committee, which felt that it was desirable to have a compromise on this issue and for that reason decided that

the four names of the two groups should be reconsidered/in a way that two from each group might be put in as candidates. Bidhan on principle refused to accept the findings of the Working Committee because according to the previous decision, the general body of the B.P.C.C. had already given their verdict on the matter. On that ground he resigned from the Committee and Shri Sarat Chandra Bose undertook the entire responsibility for running the election that year.

Early in 1937 the results of the elections were out. Mr. Fazlul Huq, who was opposing the Muslim League candidate and who was being supported by the Congress, agreed "to work with the Congress in case the Congress was willing to accept office. Shri Sarat Chandra Bose refused to consider the question of Congress accepting the office as he felt that it would be lowering the prestige of the organisation. Even the suggestion of Mr. Fazlul Huq that Shri Sarat Chandra Bose might give his approval subject to the final decision of the Congress Working Committee, which was to be held in April 1937, was turned down by Sarat Babu. This matter was discussed in the A.I.C.C. meeting in April and the consensus of opinion was that the Congress should accept office provided the Working Committee was satisfied that the then Government would give the Ministry formed by the Congress sufficient latitude for work. The Viceroy agreed to the suggestion, and, as a result, Congress Ministries were formed in many of the Provinces. In the meantime in Bengal Mr. Fazlul Huq joined the Muslim League group and formed the Ministry in 1937.

For the most part of 1937 Bidhan concentrated on his practice. The demand on his time from patients all over India was very great and he had frequently to move out of Calcutta. Politics to him was not a major occupation. He had never asked for or applied for membership of the Congress Committee yet he was elected President of the Provincial Congress Committee and was a member of the A.I.C.C. as also of the Working Committee. "I can truthfully say", reveals Bidhan, "that while I was all along taking



Dr. Roy Broadcast from the BBC



my share in the deliberations of these Committees, I have never had any ambition to occupy any position in the Political Party nor to boss it. If I hate anything in public life it is the creation of political sectors or groups for the sake of controlling political opinion. I am convinced that this universally practised political manoeuvring cannot lead to the greatest good of the greatest number, and abuses, nepotism and dishonesty follow".

Continuing Bidhan says:

" 'Honesty is the best policy', is as good a 'maxim in politics as in other activities of life, if we are to restore politics to its proper sphere of usefulness. The reason why I consider myself to be a member of the Indian National Congress, a Political Party, is that to my mind only this progressive dynamic political organisation, which the Congress is and should continue to be, can secure the greatest good for the greatest number of our people. I am not interested in the Congress because it had been controlled by a large number of notable personalities, who by their initiative, sacrifice and suffering created an organisation which brought independence to India without violence and on the basis of truth, but because it has had and still has the seed which when it grows into a mighty tree will provide the welfare of the greatest number of people. It is for those in the Congress to so nurture the seed and prepare the soil suitable for the growth of the tree as will shelter the innumerable people of countless generations. In this context there may be no competition or rivalry for posts or position or advantage in the organisation. Such an organisation can give opportunities to all who desire to serve their fellow-men. So long as the motto of a Congressman remains 'service before self', this organisation will continue to secure the greatest good for the greatest number.'

Probably this attitude towards politics would explain why Bidhan did not continuously remain on the political stage. He came on it off and on as and when required. Though

## DR. B. C. ROY

he never aspired for a position in the party or in the administration, he accepted the call whenever it came.

In 1938 Bidhan was elected an Alderman of the Calcutta Corporation in the vacancy caused by the resignation of Shri Kumud Shankar Roy at the instance of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose, who was then the President of the Congress as well as the leader of the Congress Party in the Corporation. Soon after, he found there was almost a stalemate in the working of the Corporation because the Corporation had not in the usual manner delegated any authority to the Chief Executive Officer for making certain appointments, nor did they take any steps for framing any rules in that matter. There was a statement made by Shri Subhas Chandra Bose in April 1938 that within six weeks of the functioning of the Corporation that year the Congress Party will submit a set of rules for making appointments. That was the reason why no delegation of power had taken place. The statement was made by Shri Subhas Chandra Bose in April 1938, but nothing was done when Bidhan entered the Corporation in August 1938 as Alderman. He, therefore, with the consent of Shri Sarat Chandra Bose and Shri Subhas Chandra Bose desired to draw up a set of rules for appointments to the Corporation. It was indeed a laborious task. But Bidhan as usual put his whole energy into the work and within a short time framed a large set of rules. They were all placed before the Congress Party in the Corporation and were discussed threadbare for nearly two months. Then they were placed before Shri Subhas Chandra Bose and Shri Sarat Chandra Bose and with their approval Bidhan moved them on behalf of the Congress Party in February 1939 for adoption. It was a complete set of rules for the guidance of the Corporation. After some discussion a move was made by some members of the Congress Party that the matter might be left for further consideration. "It seemed amazing to me", discloses Bidhan, "because no discussion on this point of adjournment had taken place in the Congress Party meeting. It was obvious that this adjournment was moved

## BENGAL CONGRESS

at the instance of the leader of the party, although I was not aware of it. In any case, after some days the matter was again brought before the Corporation which solemnly passed the rules. I am informed, even today, 16 years after, these rules have remained dead-letter so far as the Corporation is concerned".

In 1938 Shri Subhas Chandra Bose was elected President of the Indian National Congress. As he was the nominee of Gandhiji there was no difficulty in the election. But in 1939 Shri Subhas Chandra Bose opposed the official Congress candidate Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who was supported by Gandhiji. Soon after his election Subhas Babu became ill and it was with much difficulty that he attended the next session of the Congress at Tripuri. Owing to a difference of opinion with the High Command, Shri Subhas Chandra Bose resigned from the Congress Presidentship at a meeting of the A.I.C.C. held in Calcutta in April 1939. Gandhiji came to Calcutta and stayed at Sodepur and sent for Bidhan and asked him to take up the membership of the Working Committee. "I was hesitant in the beginning", says Dr. Roy, "because I did not want to come between the opposing groups in the Congress. I had never any group mentality so far as the Congress was concerned and I did not relish the suggestion when there existed such a difference of opinion amongst the leaders of the Congress. But even so Gandhiji persisted in my joining the Working Committee along with Dr. Prafulla Ghosh."

With the resignation of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose from the Congress Presidentship, group bitterness in Bengal politics manifested itself in many ways and Bidhan had to suffer materially and otherwise on several occasions. Even his house at Wellington Street was attacked in the party feuds. The difference of opinion manifested itself in the day-to-day working of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. The matter was placed before the Working Committee and various meetings took place at which the problem of Congress in Bengal was discussed. Eventually the Working

Committee decided to expel Shri Sarat Chandra Bose from the Congress for a certain number of years and appointed an *ad hoc* committee for stabilizing the position of the Congress in Bengal. Then Gandhiji asked Bidhan to try and re-organise the Congress in Bengal. Several attempts were made and various discussions took place but nothing very tangible came out. The group mentality among the Congressmen vitiated the entire atmosphere and Bidhan tried to avoid getting involved in these squabbles. The result was that he kept himself aloof from any active Congress work, in 1939 and 1940. Nevertheless he continued his association with the University and with the Corporation. That apart he had to attend to other duties as well. In 1939 the All-India Medical Council elected Dr. Roy as its first non-official President. As such he had to devote a considerable time for the Medical Council activities apart from his work in Bengal. He remained the President of the All-India Medical Council for several years.

In 1939 World War II broke out and it was decided by the Working Committee that the Government of India should be asked to clarify their objectives of work and that if no clarification was made or if the clarification was not found satisfactory, the Congress should ask the Legislators in the different parts of the country to withdraw from their respective Legislatures. Dr. Roy was one of the two members of the Working Committee, who opposed this move, but the majority overruled him. Bidhan felt that withdrawing from the Legislatures was unrealistic, and he represented to Gandhiji that he would not continue his membership of the Working Committee because he did not agree with the approach. On the other hand he was inclined to ask the Government to provide for training of our youths in military matters on condition that the recruits would not be subject to any order of the Government of India or the Military Department, but would be subject to the direction of a popular nationalist body. His idea was that as it was quite clear that we would not be able



NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE



to stop the Government from utilizing the resources of our country for the purpose of war, we might instead of simply withdrawing from the Legislature make arrangements to impart a sense of discipline amongst our young men so that they might render great help in our fight for freedom. But that view-point was not accepted by the Congress and Bidhan desired to be relieved of his membership of the Working Committee. When the new Working Committee was formed with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as the President, Dr. Roy requested him not to include him in the Committee. Therefore, for two years, 1940 and 1941, Bidhan was out of the Working Committee at his own request. In 1942 he was asked by the Government of India to help them in recruiting the proper type of young men for the Medical Department of the Army. After consulting Gandhiji and with his approval Dr. Roy accepted the offer in order that he might safeguard the interests of those medical men who would be taken into the war service. He succeeded in getting certain privileges which were denied to medical men during the first World War.

In 1942 came the August Declaration of the Congress and wholesale arrests were made all over the country. But as Bidhan was not taking any active part in the Congress then, he was not touched.

In the same year there was a vacancy in the Calcutta Corporation caused by the arrest and detention of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose, who was then an Alderman. There was to be an election to fill up this vacancy. Some friends approached Bidhan and asked him to stand as a candidate for election. He did not agree in the first instance. Instead he suggested that they should approach Shri Sarat Chandra Bose because he should be the first choice to fill up the vacancy caused by his brother's absence. Shri Sarat Chandra Bose refused to stand for this election. So Bidhan put in his name as a candidate for the same. Some days after Shri Sarat Chandra Bose was arrested and put into jail.

And reveals Bidhan:

"I did not know what discussions took place then, but in the first instance it was proposed to put up Shri Pramatha Nath Banerjee against me as a rival candidate. Subsequently a few days before the election Shri Sarat Chandra Bose withdrew the candidature of Shri Pramatha Nath Banerjee and put his own name. His friends approached me for withdrawing from the election. I refused to do so because I had given Shri Sarat Chandra Bose the first chance. As I had already been nominated for such election, it would be absurd to withdraw at that stage. As Shri Sarat Chandra Bose was not outside the jail for the purpose of canvassing for his election I agreed not to speak to anybody regarding my candidature or to canvass for my election, because I did not want to take any advantage over Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, who was inside the prison. But the members of the Congress party in the Corporation elected me as against Shri Sarat Chandra Bose."

Here it must be said that before the party quarrels began in Bengal, the Bose brothers and Dr. Roy worked together. Of course, later they did not see eye to eye with one another in politics. Nevertheless, Bidhan had always remained a personal friend of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He was also his doctor in times of crisis in his health.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### VICE-CHANCELLOR

Bidhan's second love, so to say, was the University, the first, of course, being the medical profession. As we have already seen, Dr. Roy became a member of the Senate of the Calcutta University in 1916. Though it is a repetition it needs reiteration that it was Bidhan's interest to uphold the integrity and status of the Calcutta University that induced him to contest the election to the Legislative Council in 1933. After having become a member of the Senate, in 1931 Bidhan was elected a member of the Syndicate. Though comparatively young in age at the time the giants of the Calcutta University like Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, Sir Nilratan Sarkar, Sir Devaprasad Sarbadhikari and others respected Bidhan for his deep interest in the educational problems and his earnestness and enthusiasm to uphold the prestige of the University. His election as the President of the Board of Accounts of the University in 1924 was an expression of the confidence the Senate and the Syndicate had in Dr. Roy. With a break of about a year he remained President of the Board of Accounts for 11 years.

As in other fields, Bidhan never aspired to hold position, power and responsibility. Invariably these were thrust upon him and whenever it was demanded of him to take up a particular position of responsibility he always accepted it with a determination to do his best.

Dr. Roy was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University towards the end of 1941. Those were the war years and after the fall of Rangoon panic reigned over Calcutta with mass exodus from the city in fear of bombardment by the Japanese. The field of education was vitally affected by this unprecedented situation and it was left to Bidhan to bring order out of chaos. The city became deserted which of

course meant dislocation of studies. It was left to Bidhan as Vice-Chancellor to take upon his own shoulders the tremendous responsibility of providing air-raid shelters for schools and colleges as also of regrouping them so that education might not suffer. He had to organise educational centres for examinations outside the territorial limits of the University. Even the head of the examination section with his office had to be shifted from Calcutta to Berhampore. Bidhan worked day and night to re-arrange and re-organise examination centres and schools. In addition he had to arrange for the relief both of students and teachers. He managed to bring about the relaxation of the provident fund rules to help teachers in their distress. And to the University employees relief in the shape of sale of rice at reduced rate was given.

During his time of Vice-Chancellorship the University was approached by the Government of India to open classes for students wanting to go in for Air Force training, training for Pilot service, training for Ground Engineering, etc. Bidhan had always thought that the best way to inculcate the spirit of discipline in the students was to give them military training and he readily accepted the suggestion. There was so much keenness on the part of the students to join the Air Force that he considered it desirable to open classes for them. An Air Force Officer used to come from Delhi to select the personnel of the trainees. After completing their training in the University they were examined, and if found suitable, were taken into the Air Force. A shed in the University College of Science was utilized for the purpose. A large number of equipment and diagrams including an old aeroplane were brought in for the purpose of giving preliminary training to the students. Bidhan felt happy that the Officers who came from Delhi were greatly impressed by the keenness of the students of Bengal for Air Force training. Unfortunately these classes continued only up to the time Bidhan remained as Vice-Chancellor.

In 1942 Bidhan was approached by various industrial organisations to open classes for Social Welfare courses.

## VICE-CHANCELLOR

Obviously industrialists realised by then the value and the importance of employing Welfare Officers, who were conversant with the work of the industries and could be the connecting link between the management and labour. The Vice-Chancellor readily agreed and classes for Social Welfare were opened in the University mainly with the aid of the professors. Several technical men outside the University also helped in training the students for the Social Welfare course. Bidhan approached the Government of India for encouragement in developing the courses. Their response was gratifying.

It was Bidhan who conceived the idea to have a school for jute technology in Calcutta. He approached the jute industry and his efforts in this direction succeeded in making them invest nearly Rs. 9,00,000/- for a building. It was erected in a part of the University land at Ballygunge Circular Road and it has been running very creditably ever since. The preliminary object of the institution was to train Indian students in the management of the jute industry. "The enthusiasm of the industry itself has been very gratifying" admits Dr. Roy.

The Social Welfare institution started by Dr. Roy in 1942 has now a building of its own near the University and is becoming more and more popular. It has attracted the attention of workers in different fields of industry and business management. The institute is still under the University, although it has got its own governing body of which Dr. Roy is still the Chairman.

After the bombing of Calcutta on two or three occasions towards the end of 1942, the exodus problem, as has been already mentioned, became very acute and Bidhan had to arrange for the examinations in other centres and to collect answer papers through the University's own agencies. It was a very hard task when we know that even in normal times things could not be managed smoothly. But Bidhan did it satisfactorily.

Due to the paucity of funds on account of the needs of

### DR. B. C. ROY

the army and the war, the University of Calcutta could not take up any schemes for further development.

In recognition of his service to the University as a member of the Syndicate and Senate as well as Vice-Chancellor, the degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa* was conferred on him in 1944. Even to this day Dr. Roy has kept up his love for the University, as also his interest in education. Technological and Medical Institutions have been increased to afford opportunities for young men and women to qualify themselves for useful professions. It must be said that it was during his Vice-Chancellorship that Dr. Roy introduced the condensed course in medicine to give the Licentiates a chance to obtain their degrees. A very large number of Licentiate Doctors from all parts of India have been benefited by this innovation and are to-day occupying positions of responsibility in the medical profession. Besides, Bidhan was also interested in the development of fine arts and during his Vice-Chancellorship he encouraged University courses of study in this subject.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### AGA KHAN'S PALACE

In 1943 Gandhiji began his "capacity fast" for 21 days in the Aga Khan's palace, where he was housed after his arrest, in the "Quit India" movement. He was asked whether he wanted any of his own doctors to attend on him.\* Gandhiji suggested the name of Dr. B. C. Roy. Thereupon Government intimated that Dr. Roy would be allowed to attend on Gandhiji during his fast on three conditions:— \*

- (1) That he would not issue any statement regarding Gandhiji's health except as a bulletin in consultation with Government doctors.
- (2) That he would not utilize any information he had in the Aga Khan's palace for the purpose of any political propaganda.
- (3) That he should agree to reside in the palace itself.

Bidhan agreed to conditions (1) and (2), but refused to accept the third as he was not a prisoner. He argued that he should be allowed to stay wherever he liked and must have the freedom to attend on Gandhiji whenever necessary. The Government agreed to this, but informed him that they would not pay his passage to Poona and back nor his hotel expenses. And Bidhan must have informed the Government that he did not expect either from any source in the matter of attending on Gandhiji. So he went to Poona and stayed with some friends. As soon as he met Gandhiji, he asked him what was meant by "capacity fast". Gandhiji replied that he inwardly felt that he had the capacity to undergo a fast for 21 days. "If, however, God willed otherwise, and I die within the period I would gladly welcome the end", added Gandhiji.

There were three doctors of the Government—General Candy (the same man who operated upon Gandhiji for

## AGA KHAN'S PALACE

Appendicitis in 1923), Col. Shaw and Col. Bhandari. Gandhiji's doctors were Dr. Roy, Dr. Gilder and Dr. Sushila Nair. As the fast progressed Gandhiji's condition went from bad to worse. On the 13th day Gandhiji began vomiting and he was very depressed. His blood and urine examination showed that his condition was deteriorating and that he could not retain anything taken in. His secretions had been practically stopped and "to all intents and purposes", says Bidhan, "he was in a semi-comatose condition, the result of auto-intoxication".

At about 2-30 P.M. that day General Candy, the Surgeon-General to the Government of Bombay, and the other Government doctors felt that the end was near. General Candy then called Bidhan and said: "Dr. Roy, Gandhiji has no more capacity to continue his fast. We must inject glucose if he refuses to take any by the mouth".

Bidhan replied that soon after he came to Poona, Gandhiji made him promise that they should not give him glucose either by the mouth, by the rectum or by injection. Gandhiji was by nature averse to any injections. Of course, being a prisoner he was actually under Government control and they could give him injection by force.

But said Bidhan: "If it causes a mental shock, as it easily might, and some evil results follow, I would be free to declare to the world that you forcibly injected glucose into him which caused death in spite of my warning". At that the Government doctors were not prepared to risk the experiment. General Candy then went in and met Gandhiji. Evidently his persuasion did not succeed in making Gandhiji agree to take glucose in any form. And when he came out of the room General Candy was in tears obviously feeling helpless to save Gandhiji. The doctors then issued a bulletin stating that Gandhiji's condition was grave and was causing anxiety. If no marvellous change occurred within the next few hours his condition might be desperate. Then Bidhan went to Gandhiji's bedside and pleaded with him to take 4 ounces of sweet lime juice which



DR ROY WITH FOUL RABINDRANATH TAGORE



## AGA KHAN'S PALACE

might sooth the stomach and yet would not affect the fast. Bidhan argued that as it belonged to the citrus group, he could take it since he had no objection to drink citrus juice and water. Gandhiji accepted Bidhan's request and drank 4 ounces of lime juice. It worked like a miracle. The vomiting ceased ; he could take water with ease and retain it, and he passed urine in the evening after 12 hours. Dr. Roy went out of Aga Khan's palace at 9 P.M. fully satisfied that Gandhiji had turned the corner.

But to the world outside it was an anxious' night as the news went fast that Gandhiji's condition was desperate.

There is an interesting story about it. Next morning at 8 o'clock when Bidhan was returning to Aga Khan's palace, he found a large number of reporters, American, Indian and English, round about it. Among them he saw one American correspondent with blood marks all over his chest. When Bidhan asked what had happened to him, he replied that it was mosquito bite as he stayed the whole night outside the gate of Aga Khan's palace on the report that Gandhiji might not survive the night. Actually when the reporters found a large number of guards round the palace they wanted to know the reason for this extra precaution and the Prison Superintendent had told them that instructions and directions from the Government had already come for the funeral procession. "It appeared", says Bidhan, "that after the issue of our joint bulletin on the previous evening, General Candy had sent a personal report to the Government of India that Gandhiji would not survive that night. Thereupon the Government of India issued detailed instructions as to what the Poona officials should do after Gandhiji's death, as also about the route to be followed to the cremation ground. They were naturally concerned as to what the reaction of the people would be in case Gandhiji died. After meeting the American correspondent I rushed to Aga Khan's palace to find out what had actually happened during the night after I left Gandhiji's bedside with hope and optimism. I was really

surprised to see a large assemblage of military on the way from my house to Aga Khan's palace. When I reached the palace I learnt from the Superintendent about the personal report of General Candy and the instructions that came from Delhi. As I went into Gandhiji's room I was even more amazed to see the change in his appearance. The previous day he was lying crumpled up in his bed with a face indicating pain and suffering. It seemed a desperate fight was going on within him, but on the 14th morning he looked like a conquering hero. He had grappled with death the whole of the previous day and had won in the encounter."

Making a reference to this chain of events when he spoke at the Poona Medical College a few days later, Bidhan said: "Gandhiji had fooled the Government and death itself". The then Government did not forgive him for this.

Gandhiji continued to remain in Aga Khan's palace for another year (1944). The then Secretary of State for India directed Dr. Roy to examine Gandhiji as he was suffering from Ankylostomiasis. Bidhan saw him and sent his report regarding the physical condition of Gandhiji. On that came the order to release him. He went to Juhu for a time, and Bidhan came back to Calcutta from Poona. When he next went to Juhu, Bidhan took with him the latest drugs for Ankylostomiasis.

And says Dr. Roy: "Gandhiji was in no mood to take the medicine as he said it was not manufactured in India. An associate of Gandhiji pointed out that sodi bicarb which he used so freely was also not manufactured in India. Then he said: 'Why should I take your treatment? Do you treat the 400 millions of my poor countrymen free as you have come to give me a free treatment?' I replied: 'No, Gandhiji, I could not treat all patients free, but I came to Bombay not to treat Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, but to treat 'him' who to me represents the 400 millions of my countrymen. By treating such a man I could say I was giving free treatment to the 400 millions also.' Gandhiji replied: 'You are arguing like a third class lawyer of a

## AGA KHAN'S PALACE

mufassil court. All right, bring the medicine, I will take it'. He took it and was cured. Gandhiji had the greatest resistance to any treatment according to the Western system of medicine unless it was emergent and essential. And yet he had respect for practitioners of the Western system if they felt that they were honest in their convictions regarding the system."

## CHAPTER XXV

### GANDHIAN INFLUENCE

Bidhan's intimacy with Gandhiji since the day they met at Chittaranjan's house soon after his death, grew year after year all along developing a kinship in spirit. It was a case of mutual attraction, Bidhan finding in Gandhiji the spiritual inheritance he had from his own parents of whose sacrifice and service, devotion to and faith in God, mention has already been made. Gandhiji believed in the doctrine preached in the Gita "*Karmanyebadhikaraste ma falesu kadachana*" meaning "You have a right to work, but the issues are not in your hands". That was also the life's philosophy of Bidhan, who confesses: "Throughout my life I have undertaken responsibilities, oftentimes beyond my physical and mental capacity, sometimes I have succeeded after I have failed. But my duty lay in putting an all-out effort to perform the task". It was his teacher and patron, Col. Lukis, who impressed on him early in his career the great maxim: "It is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all." Gandhiji, as is known to all, often undertook Herculean tasks and sometimes he even admitted that he had committed Himalayan blunders. Yet he pursued his task with faith in God. Bidhan had learnt from his parents that no idea born of Truth ceases to exist, and that Truth is God.

Gandhiji's approach to human problems attracted Bidhan to him as it did many others. "My medical studies", says Dr. Roy, "gave me the conviction that the human body can only function by adjustments between the activities of different organs of the body and not by suppression or coercion of one organ over the other. If this principle be true for human organs it must be true of human relations also. Such adjustments can only be brought about if the

## GANDHIAN INFLUENCE

organs worked truly and without 'violence'. This formula of Gandhiji made me feel that his solution of ailments of the body politic must be the same as in the case of the human body. Thus I was attracted to Gandhiji's methods and technique due to my subconscious obedience to Laws of Physiology."

It would not be quite true to say that Gandhiji influenced Bidhan in his professional life. Dr. Roy had achieved the distinction of leadership in the medical world long before he came to know the Mahatma. Nevertheless, due to his intimate association with Gandhiji, Bidhan realised clearer what he had already perceived in his professional career that the mind through the practice of will power 'could almost guide and control the functions of the body.

"While the attraction was mutual, yet I must confess", says Bidhan, "we differed on many things. Gandhiji had the courage to suffer and to sacrifice everything he possessed, in obedience to the will of God. I cannot say that I have had that much of courage although service to fellow beings has been an inspiring motive with me in all my life".

Here it must be said, that unlike many others, who came under the Gandhian influence and were closely associated with him, following him blindly and accepting his views unquestioningly, Bidhan always used to argue with the Mahatma whenever he was not personally convinced of his policy, programme or philosophy. Therefore it would be highly interesting to have Bidhan's valuation of the Gandhian creed in his own words. To a question put to him on the subject he wrote:

"What is known as Gandhian creed is his declaration of his faith in the principles of Non-violence and Truth. All his teachings to his followers, viz., Removal of Untouchability, Hindu-Muslim Unity or use of Khadi flow from this fundamental creed of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji believed in this fundamental concept, that in our lives—whether individual or collective—the principles of Truth and Non-Violence should be predominant

operative factors. Let us analyse what these two principles are. Are they two distinct principles or do they merge into one? Whatever is Non-Violent is True and whatever is True is Non-Violent. How do we arrive at this conclusion? In our daily lives we meet with situations or incidents where conflicts of ideas, ideals or actions occur. The way to solve these problems or conflicts should be through Non-Violence. This means that there should be no attempt to use force to crush the opponent's point of view, or subdue the enemy, but to consider calmly arguments in support of 'his view and find out whether they conform to what, in the opinion of the individual, is true and honest. If that be done, one should, according to this creed, find a reply to the opponent's arguments or counteract his actions without using force to coerce or crush the opponent. On the other hand, when one meets with danger or opposition, unwillingness to face it would indicate an attempt at 'escapism'. If we meet a danger and run away from it, or if we meet an opponent and avoid facing him, then Gandhiji would call it 'Non-Violence of the weak'.

It is essential, therefore, for a votary of this creed to boldly face the opponents in a non-violent spirit. If the results that follow out of this conflict are not in favour of the person who follows the creed of Non-violence, it does not matter. The issue of the conflict is really not of fundamental import. It might go against him. He might even lose the game. He might find the views of the opponent to be too strong for him. And yet, it is better to have 'tried and failed' than never to have tried at all. The opponent or the hostile situation must be faced in a spirit of Non-Violence.

*"Karmanyebadhikaraste ma falesu kadachana"* says the Shastras. 'We human-beings can only have the privilege of working our hardest: the results lie in God's hands'. Gandhiji also maintained that 'Ends never justify the means'. We, men of the world, usually follow the

## GANDHIAN INFLUENCE

opposite course. We set our heart on the 'End', we utilise every means, fair or foul, so long as we can reach the desired end. We not only abjure Truth, but do Violence to it. The objective of the common mortal in a fight is to win the game, not to play the game fairly and honestly. In such a case, the means becomes of primary importance and may often be dishonest. Therefore, according to Gandhiji, in our struggles in life, if we choose the path of Truth, we avoid Violence. On the other hand, what is Truth is also Non-Violent, according to him. Truth can never resort to force or coercion because its votary recognises and respects Truth in others. But to follow the path of Truth and Non-Violence is not an easy matter, because there is nothing like absolute Truth in this world.

What would appear true today may become untrue tomorrow. The laws of nature which man has discovered today and which he considers to be true, may on further investigation be found to be untrue. The peak of the Himalayas which appeared to be a true summit of the mountain range might, on going higher, become only a subsidiary summit, the real summit being much higher. If that be true of the physical world, it is much more so of the moral and spiritual world. In these spheres, subjective realisation, and not objective impression, is our guide. In these regions of mind and spirit, one has therefore to depend on one's environments, upbringing, training and experience for guidance. In deciding what is Truth, one has to rely on his own inner judgment. What appears to be true this moment may thus become untrue at the next moment. It is clear, therefore, that in order that one might perceive the Truth, he has to undergo '*Sadhana*', "penance" and various forms of discipline which are necessary for developing these faculties of perceiving the Truth. It is only by constant vigilance over one's actions and thoughts that one is capable of cultivating this faculty. In undergoing such

penance, such rigorous discipline, one must abjure anger, jealousy, or any of the passions which rule the animal man. In fact, discipline is necessary for the purpose of controlling them. The more one is purified the more he disciplines himself, and the more one subordinates his emotions and passions to what is eternal, permanent and true, the more he begins to realise Truth. No one can undergo this process of Purification if he is Violent in Thought and Action.

To Gandhiji, therefore, Non-Violence and Truth were almost synonymous and out of this unity arose all the formulae and canons of life which he enunciated from time to time and he himself followed. Take for instance his insistence on the wearing of Khadi. It is not for the purpose of forcing a decision on people who were accustomed to wearing foreign cloths. It might perhaps have been considered by some as a political weapon against the foreigners, but fundamentally the idea of his insistence on Khaddar arose from the fact that people in this country should not become dependent upon foreign aid. Necessary things should be provided for by the people themselves and produced in the country to make us self-reliant and self-sufficient. It was not a policy of narrow exclusiveness. Such a policy would necessarily imply violence. It was not for using it as a weapon against the foreigners that Gandhiji took up the question of Khadi.

The agriculturist in India admittedly has immense amount of leisure in the year even after doing his seasonal work. For him to engage himself in some enterprise which would give him clothing would be a blessing. It was not possible for a villager, or a group of them to have mills in every rural area. It was necessary, therefore, that they should be encouraged to go back to their old system of spinning and weaving their own clothing to cover their nakedness. The approach was based on the Truth that man must be self-reliant. In so far as such activities were Non-Violent, it was a correct approach. If,



DR ROY WITH EMINENT MEDICAL MEN IN VIENNA 1957  
Seating (from left) Second Prof Fischbeck Fourth Dr Roy Fifth Prof Fugl and  
Sixth Prof Domell  
Seated extreme left Mrs Renu Chakravarti (Dr Roy's wife), Third Mrs Roy (mother  
of Renu) and extreme right Mrs Krishni Hithcen (Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's sister)



DR ROY WITH WORLD FAMOUS DOCTORS  
(Left to right) Prof Domell Dr Roy and Prof Fugl



## GANDHIAN INFLUENCE

as happened sometimes, people in their exuberance had destroyed foreign clothes or burnt them, such action did not conform to Gandhiji's principles of Non-Violence and Truth. It is from that point of view that he made his famous declaration of having "committed a Himalayan blunder" and he withdrew the Non-co-operation movement after the Bardoli incident. He knew, although his suggestions were born of Non-Violence and Truth, his followers could not imbibe this spirit and merely gave vent to their hatred of the foreigners by indulging in violence. It was clear, therefore, that Gandhiji not only preached this principle but also practised it in life.

Along with many of my countrymen I wondered, during the first period of Gandhiji's declaration of faith in the principles of Non-Violence and Truth, as weapons to fight the foreigner, whether they were applicable to India, whether they were principles of any practical value in this country. They might be true in other regions, and worlds. How was it possible, I argued, for a dependent country and its people to combat and fight a powerful and fully equipped opponent like the British Imperialism with Non-Violent weapons? Was it possible for the defenceless people of this country to face the bullets and rifles and the cannons of the foreigners? Was it not a fact that the previous attempts in history for freedom of the country, for example, the Indian Mutiny of 1857, were crushed by the opponents possessing superior physical force? How could a weak, emasculated nation fight a powerful enemy? On the other hand, in the world of today, Dishonesty rules, Untruth prevails over Truth. How could human beings perform their daily work on the basis of Truth? If by declaring oneself as a votary of Truth and Non-Violence a Congressman was to act dishonestly, would not that be an act of hypocrisy on his part to declare himself as a follower of Non-Violence and Truth and not practise the same in his life and conduct? These were my reactions in the early years of

Gandhiji's declaration of the fundamental principles of life. It was natural, therefore, that I did not feel attracted to the Congress organisation which had these guiding principles but which I regarded as unattainable in life.

I, however, gradually began to realise that in this cosmic world the principle of Non-Violence was in operation everywhere. Is it possible for the stars and planets to move along their respective orbits except on the principle of Non-Violence? There is no Violence in their movement. Each moved in its orbit, after adjustment of all the forces of mutual Attraction and Repulsion. The same is true not only of the starry regions but of the objects in the world. The leaves of a tree cannot consider themselves to be more important and essential than the branches, the roots, the flowers and the fruits of the tree. If such competition existed, the tree would be devoid of its usefulness. There is an adjustment of the forces that make the seed grow into a tree which in its turn adjudicate the claim of the roots, the leaves, the flowers and the fruits for their respective growth and development. If the seeds were not sown, the tree would not have grown up; if the flowers had not blossomed then pollens would not be available for propagation of the species. In the case of the human body also, I perceived that none of the organs of the body, the heart, the lungs or the brain could exist and perform its functions unless one was adjusted to the other. In fact, health in the individual really depended upon such mutual adjustment. Diseases followed maladjustments. These adjustments again were only possible through the action and counteraction of various factors like the secretions of various glands of the body. These seemed to be so neatly and nicely adjusted that a man continues to live so long as these adjustments are available. Sometimes crisis appears, maladjustments follow. It appears that in face of such a crisis if the human constitution has the reserve power and the elasticity to meet and overcome the maladjust-

## GANDHIAN INFLUENCE

ments, the machine continues to function again normally. It might be that the break in this system of adjustments be so serious as to endanger life. Throughout the period of human existence, therefore, there is this continual conflict between different forces of construction and destruction and a solution of these conflicts must be secured for the sake of the organism as a whole. And who knows what happens to us after death? Does our experience stop short after what is known as the physical death of the individual? All thoughts and experiences which one collects throughout the earthly existence become permanent assets of the individual. The mystery of our life after death and our existence thereafter have been repeatedly discussed through centuries and I do not know of any particular view-point which has been regarded as final. No view-point can be final. The world and the individual in it are constantly in the process of evolution and development in their experiences, views and concepts. But one patent truth I have come to realise more and more that in this life and the next, the creed of Truth and Non-Violence prevailed.

This was perhaps the secret of the mutual attraction between Gandhiji and myself. I cannot say whether the whole of this process of reasoning had arisen in me "suo moto". It is quite possible, and I think perhaps it is more than possible, that the lives of my parents and their example and character had left an indelible inheritance which guided me towards this reaction to Gandhian creed. I learnt from my parents that no idea born of Truth ceases to exist. It has a faculty of spreading out in ever increasing orbits. Its influence and potency were greater than that of an Atom Bomb or Hydrogen Bomb. It would continue to operate amongst individuals in widely expanding zones of influence whether the individual is in his bodily life or not. But after death such ideas and ideologies have a chance of pervading wider regions and of widely influencing people and thoughts when the limitations of

the flesh are removed. My parents were very religious-minded. By that I mean that they had throughout their lives disciplined themselves to control passions, prejudices and emotions which are regarded as frailties in human beings. This they could not have done except through their devotion to Truth, which is God, except through prayers and meditation and penance, which, again, are guided by the Almighty. In His Universe He had established the principles of Non-Violence and Truth, and anybody worshipping Him and realising Him to be the guide of his Destiny, cannot afford to follow any other Guide. Such a practice of religion cannot remain confined to any sect, caste or form of worship. It is the development of personal relationship of the individual with the Creator which gives him the strength to follow the principles of Non-Violence and Truth. If I have, in my life, succeeded in following these principles it has been through the influence of my parents."

## CHAPTER XXVI

### CALCUTTA RIOTS

#### MALAYA MEDICAL MISSION

Bidhan was never a professional politician and he only entered the arena whenever he was called for. Otherwise he stood aloof devoting himself to his first love—medical work. His conception of politics was and is quite different from that of others. To him politics meant doing something for the betterment of the people, their conditions of life and the improvement in their environments. He had always felt that a medical practitioner should take real interest in the condition of the society in which he lives, and along with the cure he effects and diseases he prevents, he should also look after the welfare of the people amongst whom the patient's lot is cast. "The Science which deals with such matter," according to Bidhan "is politics". As such, one can understand why he had always been averse to group and party politics. "No medical man", says Dr. Roy, "can engage himself in party politics, because to a doctor there is no distinction between friend and foe, rich and poor, white and black. He has to serve everyone and look after the interests of all, no matter to what class or race they belonged".

It was because of this political philosophy that Bidhan did not take any active part in the controversies between the Congress and the Muslim League or in the negotiations which were started with the "Cripps' offer". To Bidhan Chandra Roy every Indian, be he a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Parsi, is a brother and a fellow countryman. He never agreed with the communal claims of the Muslim League. Nevertheless, he was on the best of terms with Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah, who had always respected Dr. Roy for his sobriety of views and his eminence in the medical world.

Even the talk about the partition of India or the separate grouping of Provinces as suggested by Sir Stafford Cripps was not to the liking of Bidhan and he felt that he could not do much in the negotiations that were carried on with the British Government during the war years and after. That in a way explains why Bidhan did not play a very active role on the political stage during the war years. His interests, as has already been mentioned, in those days were in getting better facilities and status for Indian medical men.

Bidhan's name will always be associated with the Medical Missions sent out from India to the Far East countries. So far as the China Medical Mission is concerned, Dr. Atal was in charge of it, but he sought the help of Dr. Roy in many matters connected with it. It was Bidhan who made arrangements for some of the appliances and equipments for the Mission and also for securing two or three persons for the Mission.

But he played a vital part in the Malaya Mission. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who came back from Malaya in December 1945, was very much distressed at the state of affairs there, at least as far as health conditions were concerned. Pandit Nehru asked Dr. Roy whether India could not arrange for a Medical Mission to be sent to Malaya to help the suffering humanity of that place. Dr. Roy agreed. Panditji issued an appeal for help and Bidhan was entrusted with the entire work of organising the Mission such as purchase of stores, selection of personnel and arrangement for their transport from Calcutta. Dr. Roy had even to secure the help of friends in Singapore and other places for the execution of the programme of work, etc. It was a Herculean task and Bidhan did it with characteristic thoroughness and enthusiasm. He was able to send out the Mission by January. They stayed there till the end of June or the beginning of July, doing much useful and valuable work. The Malaya Medical Mission was a great success and it helped considerably to give succour to the suffering people in that area. After

## CALCUTTA RIOTS

working for about seven months the Mission sent telegrams to Dr. Roy asking his permission to return. 39 persons came back and reached Calcutta on the evening of the 15th August, 1946.

August 1946 was a month that can never be forgotten in the history of India and particularly in the history of Bengal and Calcutta. Bengal at that time was under the administration of the Muslim League Ministry headed by Mr. H. S. Surahwardy. There was, so to say, a Congress Muslim League Coalition Ministry at the Centre headed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan. The Muslim League had decided on having a "Direct Action Day" on the 16th August. In Bengal, which was at that time under the League Ministry of Mr. Surahwardy, the communal tension was very high and the situation was explosive. What happened on the 16th August—the day when the "Great Calcutta Killing" started, need not be recalled as it is still fresh in the memory of this generation.

The Malaya Medical Mission, as said above, returned on the evening of the 15th August and came straight to the house of Dr. B. C. Roy at Wellington Street. Dr. Roy was away in Shillong. The Mission stored the whole of their equipments and luggages in the front room of Bidhan's house. On the 16th August, the fateful day, after the meeting on the Calcutta Maidan, the Muslims started rioting and Dr. Roy's house was one of the first to be attacked. They threw stones at windows and on the clock at the top. They broke open the doors and entered the first room in which the Mission's properties were stored. There were, besides the luggages of the 39 people, also stores in 99 huge wooden boxes. That apart there was a big sword presented to the Mission by the Chinese people of Malaya in recognition of the services rendered to them and many other things. The rioters took out two of the boxes and spread the contents on the road opposite. They took away whatever they could and then again came in and set fire to the other boxes.

As Dr. Roy was away his nephew tried his best to secure

help from the Police to protect the house from the hooligans, who were out to destroy everything. Lalbazar was not only unresponsive, but was also absolutely indifferent. In the circumstances he telephoned the Governor's Secretary and asked him to intervene in the matter. That had some effect. After an hour and a half the Police came on the scene. Almost a miracle had happened in the meantime. Next to the packages the miscreants set fire to, there was another box in which 10 gallons of rectified spirit was stored. Fortunately, as if by providential hand preventing the fire, the box was saved; otherwise there would have been a terrible explosion causing disaster of considerable magnitude. In the meantime the Hindus of the locality hearing of the attack on Dr. Roy's house organised themselves and rushed forward to defend it and they came in a body determined to save Bidhan's house. The miscreants fled.

When the fateful Calcutta killing started on the 16th of August and Bidhan's house was attacked by miscreants, he was at Shillong. On getting a telephonic information about the Calcutta situation he immediately left Shillong by train. (At that time there were no air services between the two provinces. Probably that train journey must have induced Dr. Roy to associate himself with the Airways India of which he was the first Chairman, to open an air link between Calcutta and Gauhati.) The train was crowded and at Parbatipur the passengers had to change over from the metre gauge to the broad gauge. Bidhan found it very difficult to get accommodation as almost all the seats were commandeered by the Military proceeding to Calcutta. However, he got into a compartment and reached Barrackpore. The train would not proceed further as reports came that violence and bloodshed still continued in and around Calcutta. So he was forced to de-train at Barrackpore. Then the problem for him was to reach home. He saw the S.D.O. of Barrackpore who tried to get in touch with the District Magistrate of 24-Parganas to arrange a transport for Dr. Roy. As a matter of fact they were six who were detrained at





• Malaya Medical Mission Dr Ro with Moula Abul Kalam and his family

## CALCUTTA RIOTS

Barrackpore. Of them two were Europeans, one an Indian I.C.S. officer, one a lady and Bidhan and a relation of his. After some difficulties Bidhan managed to meet the District Magistrate who had just come to the Barrackpore Station for inspection and told him of his difficulties to reach Calcutta. He bluntly told him that he was not prepared to take any one unless he was a Government servant or a European. "Recalling the incident", Bidhan says, "I looked at him with amazement and I wondered how he could so bluntly refuse to help those who asked for the same."

He took in his own vehicle the two Europeans and the Indian I.C.S. officer who were with Bidhan leaving the rest as stranded. There was hardly any chance of reaching Calcutta because no conveyance of any sort was available at that time and every body was afraid of the violence on the wayside. Fortunately for him the Superintendent of Police who was a Bengali whom and whose family Dr. Roy had treated before came up to him and told him that whatever the Magistrate might say he would take ~~Bidhan~~ and his relation in his own transport vehicle and reach them to Calcutta. So he did. But the S.P. had to drive the vehicle through a circuitous route to reach Calcutta. They travelled on several avenues right upto the Maidan as it was difficult at that time to go to Wellington Square which was still the scene of attacks and counter-attacks of opposing groups. After the maidan, again they travelled through a circuitous route and reached the quarters of the S.P. at Alipore and then after depositing the lady and other persons in the car Bidhan reached the house of his cousin in Mayfair. He was informed over the telephone that the surroundings of his house were still unsafe and that it would be wise for him to stay in Mayfair and he stayed there a month and a half although he used to go every day to his house to see that it was properly looked after.

For nearly 20 days he moved about in different parts of Calcutta in order to give relief to the people of Calcutta. "One of my first objects", reveals Dr. Roy speaking of those

#### DR. B. C. ROY

August days, "was to cremate the bodies lying unattended on the streets of Calcutta." Dr. Roy in attempting to do this had to risk and endanger his life, for, in those days no one was safe without police or military protection. But Bidhan, courageous as he was, moved out fearlessly. But he could not ask others who went with him to share the risk. Therefore he got in touch with Governor Barrows and after a lot of arguments with him the latter gave him police escort. Thereafter Bidhan with the help of some volunteers was able to cremate about 1400 bodies in course of a day or two. Even the arrangements for the cremation were very difficult as no one would be willing to touch a dead body which was partly putrefied and emitting bad odour. After considerable difficulties Dr. Roy was able to remove quite a large number of those decomposed bodies for cremation.

Though accustomed as a doctor to see people dying, Dr. Roy confessed to me that he had never seen death in such conditions—bodies mutilated and thrown into sewage, cut and disfigured. Bidhan was greatly concerned about the safety of students and others living in various hostels of the different institutions. He used to enquire about them and when necessary, to visit those places. He further wanted to give relief to the inmates of hostels and boarding houses of the different institutions who could not at that time move about freely. Bidhan's influence and prestige secured for him one of the officers of the Government and with the help of the police escort he was able to save a large number of boarders from those hostels and institutions which were located in disturbed areas. The violent situation in Calcutta continued till about the 3rd week of September when things settled themselves. What he witnessed in those days may be put in his own words. "I used to notice during my movements through the streets of Calcutta during the trouble period men with open swords and other lethal weapons. A group of people who are called Ansars were brought in by the Muslim League Government. Their apparent duties were to be of help to the police but what they really did was

## CALCUTTA RIOTS

to give protection to the Muslim gangs when they were out to do some mischief." In any case it was a very difficult period and barring one or two senior officers of the police, no one was given any help.

Bidhan left for Europe and America on the 2nd June, 1947, the day before the announcement of the Mountbatten Plan of partition of India. He had to get some expert opinion on the condition of his left eye in which nuclear cataract had begun to be formed early in 1945. When in March 1947 he decided to leave India the political situation was uncertain and the question of the partition of India was just being discussed. During the months of April and May, 1947, there were discussions held in different parts of Bengal and India in which Bidhan took part. The problem before the country was to accept partition or to allow the continuation of British domination. Although Bidhan was feeling quite unhappy about the prospect of partition, particularly because of the dismembering of Bengal and the Punjab, he also agreed with the other leaders of the country that partition might be accepted if there was no other alternative by which Britain was to leave India. The Congress under the direction and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi tried its best to avoid the vivisection of the motherland. The Congress had resolved to accept any solution of India's political situation which was agreed to by the two communities. In that attempt a joint Ministry was formed at the Centre composed of the nominees of the Congress and the Muslim League. But it failed to achieve that understanding between the two communities, or better, the two political parties. The Cabinet that was formed at the Centre did not work smoothly. Then came the "Great Calcutta Killing". There was even fear that a civil war might occur in India and to avoid any further bloodshed and chaos the Congress leaders agreed to the partition of India.

Bidhan felt extremely sad at this situation in the country. He did not want partition and yet partition was inevitable. The political situation in India in the first half of 1947 was

**DR. B. C. ROY**

such that Bidhan felt that he would not be of much service. Moreover he had not entered the Assembly during the general election of 1946. He was quite content to be immersed in his profession. He had further decided to devote some of his time abroad as he was pursuing a type of research in diabetes in which he had long been interested.

On the morning of the 2nd June, the day he left for Europe, Bidhan met Gandhiji at Delhi, who was then discussing the proposals for partition with Khan Abdul Gaffur Khan. Gandhiji told Bidhan that "the proposed partition ran counter to all he had worked for in his life time. It separated the Hindus and Muslims into two opposing camps".

## CHAPTER XXVII

### CHIEF MINISTER

With Gandhiji's permission Bidhan left India. He was both happy and unhappy. Happy, because the long desired freedom was coming to India,—unhappy, because of the proposal to divide India which meant partition of Bengal.

On his way to America Bidhan stayed a few days in London for the purpose of making some enquiries on behalf of the Government of India regarding the Army Medical Service. In the meantime the Mountbatten plan was announced in India and Congress leaders were discussing about the formation of Ministry in the various States. Most of the top leaders wanted Bidhan to come back to India and to take part in the formation of the West Bengal Cabinet, and they made urgent telephone calls and sent repeated telegrams to him in London. Dr. Roy refused to come back primarily because he was not interested in becoming a minister.

But soon after he reached the United States in July, 1947, he got a telephonic message from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru asking him to accept the Governorship of United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh). "I had no conception", reveals Bidhan, "what this meant under the new dispensation, but I felt sure that this was not my job. I told Pandit Nehru that I could, if there was any great urgency about it, accept the post for a period not exceeding five months but, I could not return to India before September as my eye doctor wanted me to be there under his observation till then."

Later he was informed that Mrs. Sarojini Naidu had valiantly agreed to work in his place although in the meanwhile Bidhan's appointment was approved by the King of England and was gazetted.

On the 1st of November, 1947, Bidhan returned to India. "I found", says Dr. Roy, "much to my joy that Mrs. Naidu

was quite happy in her new position and performed her duties very well. On my way back to India I had definitely decided to resign from the post of Governor."

As soon as he went to Delhi he informed Pandit Nehru about his decision. The same evening he met Gandhiji who greeted him saying: "Bidhan, now that you have resigned from the Governorship, I cannot call you 'Your Excellency' any more".

Bidhan replied: "Gandhiji, please do not worry about it, as I can give you a better alternative to call me by! 'I am Roy', therefore I am 'Roy-al'. Moreover, I am taller than many others. Therefore, you may in future address me as 'Your Royal Highness' ". At this Gandhiji had a hearty laugh.

Bidhan returned to Calcutta with no intention to participate in the administration. He wanted to devote himself to his profession. The first West Bengal Ministry formed by Dr. P. C. Ghosh on the 15th of August did not have a smooth sailing. Politically, West Bengal was very disturbed, particularly because of the partition which uprooted large numbers of people on either side. Apart from that, there were political parties who were not very favourably disposed to the Congress. Then again, within the Congress Party itself there were differences of opinion. The old group mentality which characterized politics in Bengal in one form or other still continued to disturb the Congress Party. Dr. P. C. Ghosh could not keep under control the various groups and sections in his party. Many requests were made at that time to Dr. Roy that he should enter active politics to direct affairs in the State.

Towards the middle of December Dr. Roy went to Delhi and there met Dr. Shyamaprosad Mookerjee who was suffering from gall-bladder trouble. Bidhan and Shyamaprosad were very intimate friends and Dr. Mookerjee had always regarded Dr. Roy as an elder brother having seen the affection that his father Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee had for the doctor. Dr. Roy examined Shyamaprosad

## CHIEF MINISTER

Mookerjee. They discussed many things and in the course of their talk, Shyamaprosad said that he had not yet resigned the membership of the Bengal Legislative Assembly to which he was elected from the constituency of the registered graduates of the Calcutta University. He wanted to resign and suggested that Dr. Roy should get in, in his place. Bidhan agreed to it on condition that he would be free to resign if Shyamaprosad for reasons of health could not stay in Delhi and came back to Calcutta.

Accordingly Dr. Shyamaprosad Mookerjee resigned his seat in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, and Dr. Roy offered himself as a candidate for election from the University Constituency. Towards the end of December, 1947, Bidhan was elected unopposed. Soon after, Dr. P. C. Ghosh, the then Chief Minister, asked Bidhan to join his Cabinet. Dr. Roy refused to accept the offer as he had no intention at the time to be in the administration. Nevertheless, he was willing to work for any development scheme as a non-official member, if and when his co-operation was needed.

The first meeting of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly was in January, 1948. At that time everybody was agitated for one reason or other, especially because of the unsettled conditions, influx of refugees, activities of underground parties and labour troubles. Dr. Ghosh's Ministry had introduced in the Assembly the West Bengal Security Bill about which there was sharp difference of opinion even amongst Congress members, and also heated discussions.

As said above, conditions in Bengal and particularly those in Calcutta were very disturbed and the maintenance of law and order was extremely difficult. In fact, to prevent disruptive forces from activities calculated to create chaos, Dr. Ghosh's Ministry had to take Police action, and any Police action against any kind of agitation will always create a lot of public resentment. In the circumstances many Congress members of the Assembly wanted a change in the leadership of the party. They put in a letter intimating their want of confidence in Dr. P. C. Ghosh and selecting

DR. B. C. ROY

Dr. B. C. Roy as the leader of the Congress Legislature Party in his place. Bidhan was not aware of it ; nor was he consulted.

On the 12th January, 1948, at about 11 in the morning Dr. Roy received a 'phone call from Dr. P. C. Ghosh informing him of the decision of the Congress Legislature Party and suggested that he should forthwith form a Ministry. Prafulla Babu wanted to be relieved of his responsibility. That was just 15 minutes before Bidhan was to leave for Delhi to attend on Gandhiji who had started his last fast on that date. The call had already come and Bidhan was getting ready to catch the plane. So he told Dr. Ghosh that for one thing he was not aware of the decision of the Congress Legislature Party choosing him as the leader and for another he could not under any circumstances postpone his journey to Delhi as he wanted to be at the bedside of Gandhiji. But Dr. Ghosh insisted that he should forthwith form a Ministry and then go to Delhi the next day. Dr. Roy did not agree to the suggestion and straightaway went to Delhi.

He remained with Gandhiji for the duration of the fast. While at Delhi he had frequent calls from Calcutta to return and take charge of the Ministry. He refused to consider any request of that sort until Gandhiji broke his fast and recovered. On Sunday the 18th January, Gandhiji terminated his fast and on the following day at his suggestion Bidhan told him of the decision of the Bengal Legislature Party. He further informed Gandhiji that personally he did not want to take up the responsibility of forming a Ministry in West Bengal, but he would rather devote himself to medical work. Gandhiji, however, advised him that if the Congress members in the Assembly needed him, it was his duty to accept the position offered. Bidhan then decided to accept the call.

"I cannot say that it was Gandhiji's desire alone which made me decide to take up the responsibility," reveals Bidhan. "In spite of kinship with him, Gandhiji never



The two great friends Pandit Nehru and Dr Roy  
Also seen in the picture are Dr Roy's faithful bearer and his hard working Assistants,  
Saroj Chakraverty and Dhruva Sen



## CHIEF MINISTER

decided things for me, nor did I ever feel that I was to follow his desire. As a matter of fact, in my case he told me that I should make in Bengal a first class Ministry." Gandhiji even agreed with Bidhan that the personnel of his Ministry might be chosen on the pure consideration of ability and merit rather than of party membership.

On his return to Calcutta, Dr. Roy intimated Dr. Ghosh and others in the Congress Party that he was willing to accept the responsibility. The first problem for Bidhan was to choose the personnel of the new Ministry. Dr. Roy selected a team even including persons who were not members of the Assembly. This upset some members of the Congress Party, particularly those who had been nourishing the ambition to become Ministers. They resented and objected to the idea of including outsiders in the Cabinet. But Dr. Roy insisted on the condition that he would accept the leadership only if there was no party interference.

His great advantage was that he was not anxious to be the Chief Minister, but if he was to be, he insisted, he should be given a free hand not only in the choice of his colleagues, but also in the control of the administration. Eventually the Congress Legislature Party and the Pradesh Congress Committee agreed.

On the 23rd January 1948 Dr. Roy formed his Cabinet with Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, P. C. Sen, Kiran Sankar Roy, Jadabendra Nath Panja, Bhupati Mazumdar, Kali Pada Mukherjee, Bimal Chandra Sinha, Hem Chandra Naskar, Mohini Mohan Burman, Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar and Nikunja Behari Maity.

The Chief Ministership of West Bengal at that time was not a bed of roses. Almost all the problems that Dr. Ghosh faced, were still there. Additional problems also arose. But having taken up the steering wheel Bidhan was not the man to be frightened by adversities or opposition.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE MAN AT THE STEERING WHEEL

It must be noted that throughout his career, Dr. Roy came to occupy positions of distinction without aspiring for them or working for them. Even as a medical man, Bidhan never had the ambition to lead the profession though he had the will to success. In everything entrusted to him and in any work that he undertook to do, his sole objective was to give his best. Thus, without even dreaming of it, he became a leader of the medical profession in India at a comparatively young age.

In the history of Bengal, few men had achieved such unique distinctions as Bidhan Chandra Roy in the different fields of activities. Apart from becoming the No. 1 in his profession, Bidhan alone had the coveted honour of wearing the triple crown of the Mayor, the Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Minister. In addition, he enjoyed the unique distinction of becoming the first President of the Indian Medical Council. He continued to be its President for several years. All these positions, so to say, came to him without his seeking for them, and he followed the motto that impressed him throughout his life: "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might".

Having taken up the reins of administration of West Bengal, Bidhan put his heart and soul into the work. The political situation in the country due to the after-effects of partition was anything but calm. To that was added general unrest and economic depression. While there was not enough work and food for the people inside the State, the large influx of refugees from East Pakistan added to the gravity of the problems. The State was rapidly moving into a chaotic condition to which was

## THE MAN AT THE STEERING WHEEL

added agitations of various kinds threatening the very foundations of law and order, safety and security.

While the general condition was sufficiently confusing, the party situation was in a way depressing. In the Congress organisation there were many groups and sections. There were aspirants to power and position in the new set-up ; but the man at the wheel displayed a strength of character, and a will and determination to carry on the work in spite of disorder, opposition and party manoeuvring. Dr. Roy had the advantage that he became 'the Chief Minister not out of his own seeking, but at the request of the Congress Legislature Party. As such, he could stand above party, and he manifested it in the very choice of his Ministers, taking into his Cabinet persons who neither belonged to the Congress Party nor were members of the Legislature. The first thing he did was to apply his medical mind to the problems that confronted him, and to analyse the ills in the body politic as also to diagnose the disease in the Congress Party. He had to act sternly, keep the party from further disintegrating into warring factions as was the case in Bengal politics for many decades in the past. It was Bidhan's domineering personality, that, so to say, suppressed the group rivalry among Congressmen. Having called in the doctor for treatment, the party members realised that they had to accept his prescriptions. Dr. Roy neither favoured this or that party, but at the very outset acted like the *Pater Familias*. In that he was ably assisted by West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee President, Shri Atulya Ghosh, and other leading Congressmen. Later, he added to his team of Ministers Mr. Kiron Sankar Roy, an experienced parliamentarian and one of the remarkable personalities in the Bengal politics of the forties. Kiron Babu, however, did not live long and a promising career ended at an early age.

Having brought unity and discipline into the party, the next problem was to improve the general condition of the people. West Bengal continued to be "the problem pro-

vince of India," apart from being the storm centre of disruptive forces. Besides the unsettled conditions in the State consequent on partition and the influx of refugees, there was considerable labour unrest. Almost every day there was a demonstration for this or that. To add to this, there were also well-planned underground activities in which violence was freely used. The forces of disorder and indiscipline worked unceasingly to discredit the Government and shake the stability of the administration. But Bidhan remained calm and composed with his indomitable will to conquer every ill. In the first few years after he became the Chief Minister, Dr. Roy had to face a large number of critical situations. There were demonstrations held just opposite his house in the Wellington Square almost every day, people shouting slogans against the Government and the Congress Party. Even crowds on occasions surrounded his house and the Writers' Buildings. But all the time Bidhan went on with his work both in the office and at home without in the least showing any annoyance. As far as possible and in keeping with the dignity and status of the administration he used to meet the representatives of the demonstrators and discussed matters with them. On many occasions they went back convinced of his sincerity fully appreciating the difficulties of the Government. But not for once in those days Bidhan did succumb to threats nor did he condone indiscipline. In three years, so to say, he succeeded in eliminating the threat of indisciplined forces, and brought order out of chaos.

His knowledge of facts, practical commonsense, firmness, sympathetic understanding of every situation and a thoroughly human approach enabled him to steer the 'Ship of State' steadily forward without allowing it to flounder in the troubled waters of Bengal. The most remarkable trait in him is that he has a temper that never tires, and even in the midst of depressing situations he never shows any signs of irritation or mental agitation. It may be said of Bidhan that his power lies in his formidable intelligence, depth of

## THE MAN AT THE STEERING WHEEL

knowledge, his passion for precision and above all, the amazing orderliness of his mind. As a medical man he had trained himself to make quick decisions. The doctor is not to delay to give his prescription. And his surgical mind decides on speedy operation whenever it is needed.

Dr. Roy was never an agitator in the sense the word is commonly understood. He is of a constructive mould. His great advantage is his extraordinary capacity to have a clear conception of the problems confronting him as the administrative head of a State.

"My experience as Chief Minister of West Bengal during a very trying period," says Bidhan, "has convinced me that to run a successful administration certain definite approaches to human activities have to be secured. How far these approaches could be traced as being due to one or other of the factors mentioned in the questionnaire is difficult of assessment. To run an administration one must possess a stout heart, a determination to do or die, a preparedness to sacrifice one's ambition or lust of power for the sake of the common weal, a clear vision of the future, a knowledge of human beings and of mass psychology, a readiness to take some risks for the sake of the ideal, after carefully considering all its implications.

"My earliest memory goes to the time when, hardly a boy of five, I was attracted to a board on the bare walls of my parents' house which said "Don't say I can't do it". This generated a deep feeling in me that I must not accept defeat, however big the stake be. To do a job it was necessary to put one's best efforts remembering the maxim of my teacher Dr. Lukis: 'It is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all'. Such efforts generate in one a great potential strength which can later on be utilised even if the immediate objective is beyond one's reach. Greatly akin to the idea was the great teaching of another master, Col. Charles, 'Whatever thy hands findeth to do, do it with thy might'. Not only

must we try our best, we must do it with all our might and if we fail, it is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all. Gandhiji, following the teaching of the Gita, also taught us that 'our only right was to be able to work, the results did not matter'.

"My contact with human beings in health or disease, individually and in groups, has given me a deep insight into the manner human minds work. This again is a great help to an administrator. Such knowledge of human beings was derived from my work both as a medical practitioner and as a politician. But apart from this, the necessity of placing the interests of others over those of one's own was realised by me because of my being in politics and in the profession. If we are to serve a patient we must not consider our own comfort or interest. If we are to serve the people, the interests of the masses should be paramount and much greater than one's own personal interests or ambition. One has to merge oneself willingly, consciously and voluntarily into the 'Many' if one wants to be a good administrator.

"Early in my political life, Deshbandhu told me that 'Power is a Goddess, do not attempt to woo or pursue her, she will elude you. Kick at her and she will follow you'. This was the great secret of Deshbandhu's success as a politician. This again made a great impression on my mind when I took up the work of administrator.

"Socrates once said that the greatest ideal of a man should be 'Know thyself.' Knowledge of men and things is an essential attribute of an administrator. But in order to understand others, one must understand one's ownself. My connection with educational affairs and institutions gave me the key to this knowledge. I am never satisfied with what I know. I try to seek knowledge from all sources and from all the four winds of Heaven.

"But the administrator, especially one who has to deal with a developing State, has to take risks—careful risks if you like—in order that he might succeed in developing

## THE MAN AT THE STEERING WHEEL

the State. West Bengal, in common with the rest of India, had been for two centuries under the tutelage of a system of administration devised by the British, wherein State enterprises or State trading were unknown. In the State hegemony established by the British, the administration was done by the British administrators, the trading was in the hands of their cousins—the industrialists. The new system of administration based on the will of the people expressed during a general election must be in the closest touch with the needs, desires and the outlook of the masses—who are the voters. They need food, they need clothes, they need shelter, they require more education, higher economic status, better health. All these require careful planning by the State. The psychology of the members of the services has to be tuned to this new demand. Ordinarily an official plays for safety. If he can avoid taking any step which involves risks, he does so. An administrator has therefore not merely to devise plans of development, but has to secure the proper machinery for giving effect to them. This makes the work much more complex than we can imagine. If a scheme involving expenditure of large sums of money is undertaken, the efforts of all should be to get the earliest consummation of the scheme, so that not only the people get the benefits early, but in the long run the scheme becomes less costly. This is a point of view which is ever present in the minds of all producers. The Government which undertakes trading has to follow the methods of the industrialists. I have in my humble way planned and executed many such schemes—though mostly small. They served to impress upon me not only the necessity of careful planning of all the stages of any scheme but the imperative need of reaching the goal ‘full steam ahead’. Often I have witnessed the failure of well-planned, useful schemes because those in charge did not realize the truth of the approach mentioned above.

“It is said that the family is the smallest unit of admi-

nistration ; then comes the Corporation and then the State. My experience in civic affairs not only made me more cognisant of the daily needs of the common man, but also gave me the clue to success in a sphere where the smallest needs of one small man in the city have to be adjusted to those of others. It taught me how to satisfy the discordant claims of rival groups of rate-payers in a locality. I learnt then the principles of raising funds by taxation in order to meet the needs of the people, without making it a burden on the people and how a city with all its problems of maintenance of health, provision for drainage have to be administered. Small things give the clues to big ones. State administration has to be fashioned after city governments."

Bidhan's methodical mind has developed in him a regularity of work very rarely found in other leaders especially when confronted with a hundred and one problems. To those who know him intimately, 'Bidhan' has come to be a byword for hard-work. And to him it would seem work is pleasure and that, too, the only one he has in life. Normally he gets up very early in the morning and is ready for the day even before six. Ever since he became Chief Minister he has abandoned his remunerative medical practice, but he devotes every morning two or three hours to give medical attendance free to people who come to him. And an ever increasing number of patients flock to his Wellington Street residence everyday to get his expert diagnosis and prescriptions for their various ailments. To cope with the work he has even engaged a doctor and a nurse to get in advance particulars of the patients, who seek his aid.

Thus his day begins with a free service to suffering humanity, and Dr. Roy reaches the Secretariat by 8-30 or 9. That has been his practice ever since he became the Chief Minister. Perforce it changed the entire routine of attendance and work in the Writers' Buildings where formerly officers and others used to come not earlier than 10-30 or 11 in the morning. Without issuing an order or even making





## THE MAN AT THE STEERING WHEEL

a suggestion early attendance in the Writers' Buildings came into vogue. When the Chief Minister is at his desk by 9, officers could not be late. And Dr. Roy would continue his work without a break till about 2 in the afternoon when he would have a light lunch in the ante-chamber and rest for half an hour. Again he is back at his desk and will stay on till 6, 7 or 8 in the evening according to the pressure of the day's work. In between, he would be seeing all kinds of visitors, officials, passing diplomats and statesmen from other parts of the world, as also experts brought to India for various constructive schemes taken up by the Government. Bidhan had almost revolutionised office attendance in the Secretariat without applying any compulsion.

Lord Curzon in his days of Viceroyalty had to issue an order to keep high officials in office till the evening. The practice in the past was for the big bosses to reach office by 10-30 or 11 and then go for lunch exactly at 1 to return by 2-30 or 3 and finally retire for the day by 4-30 or 5. Often the clerks had to stay on to complete urgent work. So Lord Curzon issued an order to the effect that no Secretary, Asst. Secretary or Head of a Department should leave the office before his clerks and subordinates.

Bidhan studies every file himself and does not leave it to his Secretaries to decide any matter. In the past regimes, Ministers often made their decisions on the suggestions of Secretaries. In many cases they did not even touch the files, but issued verbal orders. That is not the case with Dr. Roy. He would go through a file himself and write out in his own hand the decisions. More than that, he does not sign what other people write. Even after dictating a letter he would read through it and make corrections in his own hand before putting his signature to it. In the regularity of his work hardly any letter remains unanswered.

Dr. Roy is extremely kind and considerate to those who work with him. It is only enough to tell him of one's troubles and difficulties. He is sympathy personified. He would not only accede to their requests but in case of illness

he would even offer prescriptions. Though a hard task-master, he realises the difficulties and shortcomings of others and is always helpful. One of the most interesting things is his consideration for those who work with him. During the last Pujah days I found quite a number of *dhotis* brought into his room. He called the bearers and distributed a *dhoti* to each one of them as a Pujah present. Even the lift-men were not forgotten.

Incidentally, it may be said that there is something that attracts people working with him. For the last 8 years I have not seen any change in the personnel of those employed by him either in the office or at home. He had a driver, who served him for well over 40 years until he died recently. His old bearer has been with him now for 30 years. Likewise his Personal Assistants in the office and at home have been there from the day he became the Chief Minister. They all have to work hard, but they feel an attachment for Bidhan, which is rarely found in employees. Even when out on tours he does not forget the needs and comforts of the persons, who accompany him.

Bidhan had never been a man of the crowd. In fact, it is doubtful whether he had ever addressed a mass meeting or maidan rally before he became the Chief Minister. As a politician and as a front rank leader, he had never succumbed to the lure of the garland. He himself expressed a surprise when he was garlanded on arrival at the Howrah Station after his arrest in Delhi. It is a psychological truth that leaders, who delight in public applause, often become depressed when that is not forthcoming for one reason or other. Dr. Roy never pretended to be a leader of the masses and did not indulge in the momentary pleasure of being acclaimed by the crowd as the hero of the day. In fact, he had always shunned publicity in the numerous positions he occupied.

He is neither a demagogue nor an orator, but as a debater he distinguished himself not only in the old Legislative Council of the British regime, in the University and Corpor-

## THE MAN AT THE STEERING WHEEL

ation, but even in the present Legislature. Facts and logic are his strongest points and he would argue a case like a lawyer. It is this ability that has always enabled him to silence the opposition in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly and Council. He would not play to the gallery nor would he ever appeal to passions and emotions. In the early days of his Chief Ministership opposition to the Government in the two Houses was powerful and it was only because of Dr. Roy's factual and logical exposition of the administration's point of view that enabled him to win on every issue raised by the critics. He always came to the help of his colleagues and has been the tower of strength to the Treasury Benches. The remarkable thing about Bidhan in his Parliamentary activities is that he never loses his temper even when unwanted abuse is hurled at him, or at his colleagues in the administration or at the Party he represents. When repartee is needed he has a ready wit for it, as he once told an opposition member that as a doctor he could diagnose his ailments and prescribe the cure. He has also the rare capacity to calm a storm, and on many occasions in the West Bengal Legislature, Dr. Roy's personality and tact saved ugly situations. Though a born fighter he would concede when he is convinced that the opposition demand is reasonable and is in the interest of the people. During his Chief Ministership there were several occasions when agitation against this or that reached a high velocity. In such situations he used to confer with the opposition leaders whether of the Legislature or of other groups and to strive for a compromise.

He is free from personal prejudices and never for a moment nourishes any bitterness of thought even against people who denounce him either in the Legislature or on public platforms. In fact, I have heard him speak kindly and lovingly about such people. He realises every moment that he is the man at the steering wheel and that it is his duty and responsibility to treat all alike, no matter who shouts and who protests.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE CHIEF MINISTER AND HIS STATE

Dr. B. C. Roy is the Chief Minister of a State, which is popularly known as the "problem State." Its problems are many and varied, some peculiar to itself, and most constituting the legacy of the past. The war, famine, outbursts of communal frenzy, inter-district shifts of population in panic, enormous loss of territory at partition with the residue, about one-third of undivided Bengal, left in three disjointed portions, massive and uncontrollable movements of the dispossessed and displaced, all created numerous problems for the State. The people of West Bengal suffered many hardships in quick succession when independence dawned. Frustration was universal. Land as ever was inadequate, industries were mostly in non-Bengali hands, production was at a low ebb, prices were high, the basic necessities of life were scarce and unemployment, particularly among the middle class educated population, was rampant. Such was the situation when Bidhan came to the helm of the administration of the State.

He came with quiet determination, and with many ideas some of which were unorthodox, almost shocking in their novelty. Fantastic was the epithet with which critics used to describe the plans as Bidhan unfolded them one after another. But the ideas and plans worked, and seven years after Bidhan became the Chief Minister it is evident to everyone that West Bengal is very different from what it was about the middle of 1948.

The finances of this truncated State have improved. After partition the revenue of West Bengal was Rs. 32 crores in 1948-49; but the Budget estimate of revenue receipts for 1955-56 stood at Rs. 45 crores. The Budget estimate of revenue expenditure for 1955-56 stood at Rs. 62





DR ROY with SHRI MULYA GHOSH President and SHRI BEJOY SINGH NAHAR  
Secretary W B PCC after the 1952 elections when Congress achieved a major victory  
at the polls

## THE CHIEF MINISTER AND HIS STATE

crores as against the Actual of Rs. 29 crores in 1948-49. The total capital expenditure of the State rose from Rs. 18,15,000 in 1948-49 to nearly Rs. 21 crores (Budget) in 1955-56. West Bengal planned for an expenditure of about Rs. 69 crores for development in the five-year period 1951-56. At the end of the fourth year it was stated with "a degree of certainty" that the State's expenditure on the Plan would exceed Rs. 69 crore figure and might even reach the figure of Rs. 77 crores, not taking into account the expenditure on the Damodar Valley Project or the expenditure on a number of other schemes financed wholly with aid from the Union Government. West Bengal, according to the latest authoritative notification on the subject, had a public debt of Rs. 7·35 crores due to increase to Rs. 11·35 crores in the course of 1955-56 to which must be added the outstanding debt of the State Government to the Union Government of Rs. 103·98 crores. But "as against the total outstanding debt there are assets in the form of investments on productive schemes like the Damodar Valley Project, Mayurakshi Reservoir Project and other development schemes".....as well as "extensive and valuable assets in the form of the State transport system, buildings, lands, roads, forests, etc.".

There are innumerable other assets, visible and invisible, which have resulted from increased and increasing expenditure on administration and development. The economic condition has perceptibly brightened, as the means of effect that improvement like social services have increased. The irksome controls on the distribution of essential commodities including rice have gone. The production of rice increased from about three and one-third million tons annually in the first few years of Independence to 5 million 220 thousand tons in 1953-54 against the annual requirement of the State of about four million tons of rice. The improvement largely was the result of thoughtful planning for and intensive activities on the agricultural front. Measures estimated to cost Rs. 10·49 crores have been or are being implemented under agriculture and rural development. Many thousands

of tons of improved seeds, manures and fertilisers have been distributed. 38,000 acres of waste lands were brought under cultivation by the end of March, 1954. Over 3,000 petty works of local irrigation were executed ; over 4,000 irrigation tanks were put in order ; 5,800 acres of waste lands were brought under State forests. Major projects for irrigation and drainage including the Mayurakshi project calculated to benefit 10 lakhs of acres of land are at present in different stages of execution. All these are in addition to the gigantic multi-purpose Damodar Valley Project which has reached the last stage of execution. The Sonarpur-Arapanch scheme, at once novel and bold, designed for the reclamation of water-logged areas in 24-Parganas by draining out the accumulated water has made good progress resulting already in the reclamation of 17,000 acres of which 1,200 acres were brought under cultivation during 1953-54.

Power supply projects already executed at a cost of over 75 lakhs have opened up long stretches of the country to the north of Calcutta to the use of electricity for agriculture and industrial development as well as for domestic purposes.

On the industrial front, or, rather, in the sphere of cottage industries, schemes have been in operation for the revival or stimulation of the bee-keeping industry, mat industry, khadi industry, hand-made paper industry, silk industry, brass and bell-metal industry, handloom industry etc. Bigger schemes have been in operation for the augmentation of the supply of fish and milk. 14,200 acres of water area in tanks are now available for improved fish farming. Nursery units have been opened and fries and fingerlings are being raised in them for distribution to pisciculturists at cost prices. *Beel* fisheries in the State are being improved by advancing loans to private owners of derelict *beels*. The State Government has directly undertaken the task of exploration of the possibilities of Deep-sea Fishing in the Bay of Bengal with a fleet of 5 trawlers, 2 Danish and 3 Japanese. The scheme for the augmentation of milk supply in Calcutta has been linked with the scheme for the removal of *khatals* from the city and

## THE CHIEF MINISTER AND HIS STATE

in execution of the scheme the first unit of a Milk Colony, with accommodation for 1,272 milch animals with their offsprings, and owners too, has sprung up at Haringhata. The various products of this modern dairy farm, guaranteed for their purity, have already acquired a reputation in the Calcutta markets and have perceptibly influenced the supply and the prices of these commodities.

Considerable improvement has been effected in communication and transport in the State. West Bengal had been ill-served by roads. With her density of population, nearly three times that of India as a whole, this State at the beginning of the Plan had only 0·57 miles of road of all categories per thousand of her people, as compared with the Indian Union figure of 0·75. The cost of a reasonably complete road plan for West Bengal has been estimated at Rs. 200 crores approximately. But provision has been made for a total outlay of about Rs. 30 crores for road development works up to the end of 1955-56. Already 1,450 miles of new road have been built in addition to about 300 miles of national highways within the State. 23 bridges of the aggregate length of 6,090 feet have also been constructed. Simultaneously with the development of roads the State Government has executed a programme of development of transport. The State Transport Service has been brought into being in Calcutta without any significant curtailment of the operations of the private transport service. At the beginning of 1955 the State Transport operated on 12 routes in the city with a fleet of 286 buses including 36 double-deckers and provided employment to about 3,300 persons of whom the majority are displaced persons from East Bengal.

What decades ago used to be called nation-building activities and are now simply described as social services have increased appreciably during the last seven years. The Budget figures under any head would be impressive. The State Government's expenditure under Education, for example, increased from Rs. 2·56 crores in 1948-49 to

Rs. 6·59 cores (Budget) in 1954-55. More impressive and less deceptive is the comparison of the volumes of actual service. Let us mention only a few tell-tale figures. In 1947 there was not a single Basic School in West Bengal although the idea of the Basic School had been evolved in 1937. But in 1954 there were 275 such schools in this State. The number of primary schools of the ordinary type increased from 13,772 in 1947 to 16,689 in 1954, of Junior High Schools from 985 to 1,407, of High Schools from 761 to 1,402, of Colleges from 54 to 89, and of Technical Schools and Colleges, from 90 to 144.

In the spheres of Medical and Public Health Services, expansion has been similarly remarkable. In the second year of Independence there were less than 70 Health Centres in West Bengal. The number increased to 166 at the beginning of 1954 and was planned to rise further to 271 in 1955-56 with 2,762 beds. The number of beds in Sadar and Subdivisional hospitals has increased to 2,469 and of tuberculosis beds to 2,353. 16 National Malaria Control Units are working in the State to minimise the incidence of malaria. The number of Maternity Centres has increased to 96, of T. B. Clinics to 25, of Leprosy Clinics to 92 and of V. D. Clinics to 18. West Bengal has 82 hospital beds for every 1000 population and the number is the highest in India. An idea of the measure of improvement in public health already effected can be had from the following facts authoritatively ascertained:—Birth rate has increased from 21·3 in 1948 to 22·7 per *milla* in 1953 and death rate has come down from 18·1 to 10·2.

The State Government has planned an ambitious programme for the setting up of new townships and has completed in part the execution of some of the schemes. The most important of these is the Kalyani Township scheme under which 10,000 acres of land have been acquired near Kanchrapara of which over 3,000 acres have already been fully developed. A perfectly modern town with metalled roads, pipe water, electric light, underground drainage,



W. G. Grace with Dr. Roy in the centre, Milneria of Sikim, Pandit Nehru and Miss Indira Gandhi











